STRATHERN;

OR

LIFE AT HOME AND ABROAD.

A STORY OF THE PRESENT DAY.

BY

THE COUNTESS OF BLESSINGTON.

How like a Comedy is life!
With shifting scenes and changes rife,
Some sad, some gay; but to the wise,
A moral lesson each supplies.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

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STRATHERN.

CHAPTER XVII.

Though love of life most mortals own,
How strangely is their folly shown,
When still, to shorten its brief span,
So many different modes they plan!
To ball and opera, rout and play,
They rush to while the hours away;
Unconscious they too fleetly fly
Without the aids that men supply
When pleasure they so madly court,
And to her festivals resort,
To vanquish Time what gold they spend!
But he's their conqueror in the end.

Never, since the bereavement of her husband and son, had Mrs. Sydney experienced so much happiness as since her daughter had been affianced to Strathern. Convinced of his good principles and fine nature, she felt that she could safely confide the happiness of her

child to his care; and in this firm belief of his worth, a load of anxiety was removed from her mind. Let death now come when it might—and Mrs. Sydney often reflected on the uncertainty of life, reflections which came home to her heart, as based on the delicacy of her own health—she need have no fears for her Louisa: *she* would have a guide and protector to steer and support her through the intricate mazes of life, when a fond mother would no longer be near to watch over her; and this thought was a balm to the heart of the anxious parent, who might truly be said to live but for her child. But how was Mrs. Sydney's happiness increased when Strathern acquainted her with his desire of not separating her from her daughter! She had looked forward to such a separation as inevitable, and, though it cost her much pain, and that it required the exertion of all her self-control to contemplate it with calmness, she had made up her resolution to submit to this great sacrifice, whenever it should be required, rather than offer any obstacle to the marriage of Louisa, whenever she saw that her affections were engaged. Nor was it from many men, however worthy they might be, and however great her desire not to be separated from her child, that Mrs. Sydney would have liked to accept the proposal of Strathern to reside always with him and his wife. She had seen too many examples of the discomfort to both parties produced by similar arrangements in

other families, not to feel timid and nervous on such points; but all that she had observed of Strathern had assured her that with so amiable and rational a son-in-law she had nothing to fear in taking up her abode beneath his roof, and consequently the certainty of not being left alone, a solitary valetudinarian, to wear out the autumn and winter of her days, cheered and comforted her. The devoted attachment of Strathern to his *fiancée* would have made him an attentive and kind son to her mother, even had that lady much fewer claims to his consideration and respect than had Mrs. Sydney; but, impressed with the highest esteem for her fine qualities, and an affectionate regard for her charming manners and invariable kindness to himself, he felt towards her a lively sentiment of gratitude for the treasure she was about to consign to his care, and a determination to justify her confidence by every means in his power.

The selfish jealousy often experienced by mothers on observing the influence rapidly acquired by future husbands, over the minds of their daughters, sometimes almost superseding their own, was a stranger to the breast of Mrs. Sydney, and it was with unfeigned pleasure that she daily marked the progress Strathern was making in leading Louisa to adopt many of his opinions, and to modify some of her own. His taste for, and enjoyment of her fireside, in preference to the balls and parties nightly given at Rome, greatly

pleased Mrs. Sydney, and when he would peruse aloud one of her favourite authors, pausing occasionally to elicit her and her daughter's sentiments on it, and giving his own, she felt that their domestic circle could never be otherwise than rational and agreeable, cheered by the presence of so intellectual and amiable a companion.

Felicity has always a most beneficial effect on fine natures, and never was this fact more clearly proved than in Louisa Sydney. Happy herself, she was desirous of rendering those around her so, and her fond mother saw with joy her increased cheerfulness, the roses of health glow more beautifully than ever on her delicate cheeks, and her eyes sparkle with new lustre.

About this time, a grand *bal masqué* was to be given by the Duc de Belmonté, to which all the society at Rome was invited. The invitations were not limited to the *noblesse* alone, the position of the *duc* as banker inducing him to extend them to all those who had letters of large credit to his house; and though at his dinners, assemblies, and small balls only the best company could be found, the *monstres fêtes*, given once or twice a year, included all at Rome who were deemed admissible, and presented a most amusing, though somewhat motley scene. Its novelty tempted Mrs. Sydney and her daughter to attend it, escorted by Strathern, and the brilliant *coup d'œil* which met their eyes as they entered made them feel glad that they

had done so. The number of *salons* thrown open on these occasions, their loftiness and spacious dimensions, the splendour of their decorations, the fine works of art that graced them, with the blaze of wax-lights, and profusion of flowers spread around, and the crowds of persons of both sexes, attired in the richest and most picturesque costumes — many of them sparkling with diamonds—rendered the whole one scene of enchantment.

Louisa Sydney, with the timidity peculiar to young and sensitive women, experienced an emotion almost amounting to alarm as she entered the vast suite of apartments, that made her unconsciously cling closer to the arm of her betrothed, who, gratified by this tacit appeal to his protection, pressed the fair and rounded arm that rested on his own to his breast, and felt how much the presence of a beloved object can enhance the pleasure of every scene of amusement. His consisted more in marking the surprise and gratification of the lovely Louisa, than in any interest derived from the gaiety around him, for, while near her, he required no extrinsic cause of pleasure; but her artless expressions of admiration at the splendid *coup d'œil*, and the feminine timidity which drew her closer to his side, charmed him. The black silk mask which concealed the beautiful face of his *fiancée*, by preventing Strathern from dwelling on its changeful expression as he was wont, only rendered him more sensible to the

exquisite sweetness of the whispered tones of her voice, and to the happiness of feeling her lovely arm resting in all the confidence of love on his own. The sounds of gay music, too, exerted their usual influence on his spirits, and he acknowledged, for the first time in his life, that a *bal masqué* could be a very exhilarating amusement.

After a *promenade* through the rooms, achieved with no little difficulty, owing to the crowds that filled them, Mrs. Sydney, complaining of fatigue, seated herself by some matrons of her acquaintance, and left her daughter with Strathern, to wander amidst the groups whose fanciful costumes she so much admired. Mr. Rhymer soon discovered Mrs. Sydney, and, placing himself by her side, commenced a conversation with her.

"You are, I dare say, surprised to see *me* here; and I must confess that I am no less so at meeting you. What could induce the refined and sensible Mrs. Sydney to venture into such a motley scene?"

"The desire of giving pleasure to my daughter."

"I thought so. Where do a mother's sacrifices end?"

"As yet I have been spared any."

"Indeed! you are, then, fortunate—or, perhaps so willing to make them, that they seem light—yet the being dragged into such a promiscuous and insufferable crowd as this might by most mothers be deemed a sacrifice of no slight magnitude offered up at the shrine of maternal affection!"

"I really do not view it as such—nay, more, though at the risk of forfeiting some portion of your respect by the confession, I must avow that, when no peculiar present griefs press on me, I find my spirits cheered by observing, if I cannot warmly participate in, the gaiety of others."

"Indeed! Well, I should not have thought so. But you ladies are so *very* disinterested, so prone to give up all your own pleasures to gratify the whims and caprices of those dear to you, that nothing which you do ought to surprise one. And so you find pleasure in this motley scene?"

"As a spectatress."

"I do not know whether or not this total abnegation of self is desirable or enviable. Do you not feel that your own fireside and a book, or two or three rational companions, would be far preferable to this heated and impure atmosphere, and the noise around?"

"I shall enjoy those comforts only the more from the force of contrast. A scene like the present, if resorted to more frequently than once, or at most twice a year, would soon cease to amuse me, but, seen only once, its novelty diverts."

"Miss Sydney is, I dare say, delighted with this *bal masqué*—more so, probably, than her future husband. Strathern is not a man to be very much charmed at finding himself in a crowd, the greater

portion of persons composing which he could never in all probability meet elsewhere."

"He nevertheless appeared to enjoy it very much."

"*Appeared!* Ah, Mrs. Sydney, we must not always place implicit faith in appearances."

"Strathern is not one to assume an appearance of pleasure, if he did not feel it."

"Heaven forbid I should say he was! I only meant that, finding Miss Sydney likes gaiety so much, he has, like you, my dear madam, yielded up his own more sober and rational taste, in order that she might enjoy hers."

"You labour under a mistake in supposing that my daughter is more addicted to frequent scenes of gaiety than Mr. Strathern is."

"I crave your pardon, if I am wrong; but it *did* strike me that a *bal masqué*—and, above all, in a house where a letter of credit to the bank serves as a ticket of admission to the balls at the palace—would be the last place where affianced lovers, who could enjoy each other's society at home, would be found;" and Mr. Rhymer looked unutterable things. "What a crowd!" resumed he. "There goes the sapient Earl of Fitzwarren: he assumes no disguise, but appears in his natural character of a horse jockey. How perfectly at home he looks! not so the lady of his love, attired as the gentle daughter of the Capulets, the fair Guilietta. Ye Gods! behold the maid, 'who loved not

wisely but too well,' leaning on the arm of an English jockey! It is too much!" and the rigid muscles of Mr. Rhymer, albeit unused to the mirthful mood, relaxed into laughter. "And see," said he, as soon as he could resume his gravity, "the lady Sophia dressed as Desdemona! Who could blame the Moor for strangling such a one? Not I, I'll be sworn. But, lack-a-day, she has found no Othello, and is compelled to walk with her lady-mother, who is attired as Queen Elizabeth. Was there ever such a group? Look how stately and grand Lady Wellerby queens it! and how monstrously ugly she appears in that trying costume! What could tempt the silly woman to make such an absurd figure of herself?"

Lady Wellerby having recognised Mrs. Sydney, came up and addressed her. "I see," observed she, "that you, like me, have been obliged to remove your mask, owing to the insufferable heat. My dress, too, is so dreadfully heavy that I feel quite overpowered by its weight. Where is Miss Sydney, and what is her costume?"

"Merely a fancy dress."

"How odd! Every one I see here assumes some character or other."

"And some are right in so doing," said Mr. Rhymer; "for perhaps it is the only occasion on which they have a presentable one."

"Mr. Rhymer always says clever things—doesn't

he, Mrs. Sydney? but, somehow, I don't always understand them at first."

"You do me honour, madam," replied Mr. Rhymer, with a grave face, and a low bow.

"Does not Sophia look well as Desdemona? Olivia is costumed as Juliet, and looks charmingly. My girls are so fond of reading Shakspeare, they know half his tragedies by heart, and they would dress in his characters."

"They have made a happy selection, it must be owned," said Mr. Rhymer; "but I see no Romeo, no Othello, to attend their respective ladies."

Before Lady Wellerby could reply, Lord Fitzwarren, with his *fiancée*, came up. "Here we are, my hearties, ready to mount and ride a race for any sum you name," said he, assuming the air and manner peculiar to an individual of the class he was representing.

"I never saw your lordship so much at home as in that dress," observed Mr. Rhymer sarcastically; "it is a pity you ever should change it."

"Well said, old un! I did not think you had so much wit as to find it out. Only think, Livy wanted to make me come here as Romeo, a love-sick swain! I saw the part acted at the Opera, when the fellow did nothing but sing like a dying swan, not that I ever heard one, although I have several on the lake at my place. 'No,' said I, 'I'll be hanged, Livy, if

you'll ever get me to figure as a lackadaisical lover! You may act Juliet if you have set your heart on it, but I'll dress up as nothing but a jockey. Haven't done it amiss—have I? Smart jacket, well fitting leathers, good boots, pretty cap—why there's not a man here who ever saw a race at Epsom or Ascot that won't admit that I look precisely as the first-rate jockeys there do."

"Nobody can deny it; and, what is more, your lordship talks—ay, and thinks, exactly as these clever persons do;" and Mr. Rhymer smiled maliciously as he uttered the remark.

"You need not be so ill-natured, Mr. Rhymer," said Lady Olivia, vexed at the irony which was obvious to her, though not to him to whom it was directed.

"He's not a bit ill-natured, Livy, which surprises me? for having heard he was given to say spiteful things, I have kept a sharp look-out on him."

"His lordship renders me justice, fair Juliet, and admits the truth of my assertion. How lamentable it is that *such* a Juliet should have no Romeo, though, perhaps, the being escorted by a jockey is more *piquant* from the novelty!"

"Do let us move on. I hate to be near that spiteful old man, who looks as if made ill by his own malice," said Lady Olivia to Lord Fitzwarren, in a tone of voice which, if meant to be low, was not suffi-

ciently so to prevent Mr. Rhymer from hearing it, as might be guessed by his face, which looked even more yellow and cynical than ordinary.

"The gentle Lady of the Moor has lost her Othello, or, probably, has never found one," observed Mr. Rhymer. "It does, it must be confessed, look somewhat incongruous to see her walking with the virgin queen. Really, Lady Wellerby, your circle has distinguished itself by the choice of characters selected. So patriotic too!—to have chosen the robes of Elizabeth, and two heroines from the tragedies of our immortal bard!"

"I dare say you mean to ridicule us, Mr. Rhymer, though I don't quite see the point. Every one says," and Lady Wellerby looked as if she had said something clever, "you are disposed to be severe."

"How odd! I really thought that I passed for a very harmless and good-natured person. But, at all events, Lady Wellerby, it would be a waste of time to turn *you* into ridicule," and Mr. Rhymer glanced around as if appealing to those present.

"So here you are at last, Webworth! what the deuce kept you so late! Here has Desdemona been waiting for her Othello for the last two hours."

"I assure you, Fitz, I could not get my dwess ready befoe. It was only brought home a quarteu of an hou ago. I have a thousand excuses to make to the faiu Desdemona," and Mr. Webworth approached

the lady to offer his arm, which, though vexed at his coming so late, she gladly accepted.

"Now, am I not a good-natured fellow?" observed Lord Fitzwarren to his bride elect. "I gave that poor fellow, Webworth, a hundred pounds to provide his costume, that your sister Sophy should not be without a beau to escort her. He did not at all like blacking his face, I can tell you, but I made him."

"What! give a hundred pounds for such a shabby dress as that!" exclaimed Lady Olivia. "Why, I dare say, if the truth were known, he hired it for a few pounds, for it looks as if it had figured in the last carnival."

"Look, Livy, what a lovely figure comes here! What a shape! and how beautifully dressed!"

"I see nothing remarkable in her," answered Lady Olivia, "and have noticed several more attractive-looking women since we have been here."

"See how that conjurer follows her about!" said Lord Fitzwarren. "I have noticed him hovering around her all the evening."

While he yet spoke, a person, disguised as a conjurer, taking advantage of the male companion of the lady whose fine shape had riveted Lord Fitzwarren's attention being engaged in replying to the *banales plaisanteries* of a group of masks who encircled him, approached close behind the fair incognito, and whispered in her ear. She shrank away from his contact;

yet he still addressed her, evidently without her companion having observed it. When the latter turned round, the conjurer quickly disappeared, and now the lady and her companion joined the group where Lord Fitzwarren and Lady Olivia stood.

"You tremble, dearest — you are not well," said the gentleman. "Take off your mask, my beloved, and you will be relieved;" and he untied the riband which attached it, when the lovely face of Louisa Sydney, pale as marble, was revealed. "What is the matter, dear Louisa? A moment ago you were so well, so joyous, and now . . . ."

"It was only a slight faintness — I shall be better by and by;" but her tremulous voice and agitated countenance contradicted the assertion. Strathern led her to a seat next to Mrs. Sydney, vacated by Mr. Rhymer; and the mother, alarmed at the changed aspect of her daughter, became herself nearly as pale.

"Had we not better return home?" suggested the anxious parent.

"Oh! no, mother; let us sit here a little while, and I shall soon be myself again."

"This is one of the pleasant results of *bal masqués*," observed Mr. Rhymer. "I am sure I wonder how any one comes to them. Heat, crowds, noise, and deleterious odours *will* work their effect on delicate constitutions — a-hem! All the family are consumptive," continued he to Lady Melcombe, in a

somewhat lower tone, but still loud enough to be heard by Strathern. "What a life of misery awaits the man who weds this beautiful but sickly flower!"

Strathern turned from him with terror to look into the face of his beloved; and his alarmed countenance, as he bent his inquiring eyes on her, convinced the cynical Rhymer that the Parthian dart he had let fly had achieved its object.

"I have spoilt his evening's amusement, however," thought Rhymer. "He was so wondrously, so insultingly happy! I hate to see people happy. But it's easy enough to interrupt their enjoyment, and that's some comfort."

And now all eyes turned on a lady who walked through the noble suite of rooms, costumed as Mary Queen of Scots, but who had found means to destroy the picturesque beauty of the dress, by the enormous quantity of precious stones with which nearly every portion of it was covered. Little was the figure of the wearer calculated to set off this costume. Coarse and ill-shaped, her movements were so awkward as to render her assumption of the character of the lovely Mary Stuart perfectly ridiculous; and the beholders seemed sensible of this, for they indulged in smiles rather too openly to be consistent with the politeness generally maintained in good society.

"How rude they are!" said the would-be Queen of

Scots to a lady on whose arm she leaned. "And they call this fine company! One would suppose they never saw so many diamonds, pearls, rubies, and emeralds before — I wish I could have put on *all* my jewels, and then they would, I think, stare even more; and I would have put them on, only you persuaded me not."

"Pray, madam, do not speak so loud," whispered the companion, who, habited in a plain dress of black silk, of the fashion worn by female attendants in the time of Queen Elizabeth, seemed nervous and alarmed at finding herself in so great a crowd.

"Where can my lord be?" asked the richly attired but vulgar representative of the Queen of Scots. "His lordship promised to meet me here. Keep a sharp look-out for him, Mrs. Bernard, for I am anxious to have some one of consequence to lean on, in order to keep those staring people at a more respectful distance. I really am afraid they may snatch some of the diamonds off my dress. If I had known there was to be such a mob, I would have asked the Pope to send a few of his guards to protect me."

"Admirable!" exclaimed Mr. Rhymer. "This Queen of Diamonds, rather than Queen of Scots, is no other than the dreadful widow of the stockbroker, whose vicinity drove me from the hotel, where, previously to her arrival, I found myself comfortably lodged. Never was there such a creature. The

woman on whose arm she leans is her *dame de compagnie*, her *souffre douleur*, and the lord to whom she refers must surely be the Lord of Misrule. I wish some one would address her, for her conversation must be, I think, very amusing."

"Suppose you speak to her," said Lady Wellerby.

"I have not courage for the undertaking," replied Mr. Rhymer.

"I will, for I like a bit of fun, provided Mr. Rhymer tells me what I had best say to her," said Lord Fitzwarren. "I suppose that, unless I talk of bulls and bears, in the phraseology of the Stock Exchange, she won't understand me."

"Just ask leave to present her to her sister, Queen Elizabeth," whispered Rhymer, delighted at the notion of vexing Lady Wellerby, through the medium of her future son-in-law.

"By Jove, I will!" And off marched Lord Fitzwarren, *malgré* all the objections and entreaties of Lady Olivia, who still walked by his side, "not to speak to that dreadful-looking person."

"I hope your Majesty is quite well, and that David Rizzio is flourishing," said Lord Fitzwarren.

"I know no such person, and never heard his name before," replied Mrs. Maclaurin.

"How strange!" remarked Lord Fitzwarren, "for it has always been asserted that your Majesty had a peculiar *tendresse* for him."

"Ten dresses! Then a very great fib was asserted, for I put on no dress at all to please any such person, let alone ten," said the lady, mistaking the sense of the word *tendresse*.

"You have been accused of being rather a harsh and stern wife to Darnley. People have gone as far as to say that you blew him up."

"Then people told a very great story, for I never knew any one of the name. But what right have you to come and cross-question me about two men I never saw or heard of in all my born days?"

"Pray, madam, don't answer him," whispered Mrs. Bernard.

"But I will, though. Why shouldn't I answer him? Haven't I as good a right to speak as he has?"

"Do you ever bestow a thought on Darnley's successor, Bothwell?—him whom you urged to divorce his wife that he might wed with you?"

"Was there ever the like? Why you must be mad to torment me in this manner about men whose names I never before heard."

"Your Majesty is not, perhaps, aware that your sister, Queen Elizabeth, is present at these revels, and may take it amiss if you do not interchange greetings with her."

"Do you *mane* ould Queen Bess?" demanded the representative of Mary Stuart.

"Certainly I do. Permit me to lead you to her august presence."

"I don't want to know any thing about her."

"Ah! I see you have not forgotten your old quarrels, which is the more extraordinary, as people said you lost your head about them; and when one loses one's head, you know, or ought to know, the memory is apt to go too."

"I lose my head! I quarrel with Queen Elizabeth! I don't know what you are after, unless you mane to try to humbug me."

"Ask the lady who attends your Majesty, if Mary Queen of Scots and Queen Elizabeth were not contemporaries; nay, more, if it is not befitting that they should meet and hold converse together?"

"What does the jockey mane, Mrs. Bernard? Is he in earnest, or only wanting to make fun?"

The loud tones of Mrs. Maclaurin's voice, no less than the extraordinary brilliancy of her dress, drew a circle around her, who, much amused with the *naïveté* of her replies, could not repress the risibility they excited. Anxious to move away from the spot where they at present drew so much, and, to her, such painful attention, Mrs. Bernard advised her Majesty of Scotland to seek her sister queen, and, marshalled by Lord Fitzwarren, she approached Lady Wellerby, who, unmasked, sat conversing with Mrs. Sydney and some other ladies.

"Will our gracious Queen of England permit one of the most faithful of her majesty's subjects to present the Queen of Scotland to her?"

"Our sister of Scotland is welcome," said Lady Wellerby, willing to humour her future son-in-law's joke.

"I'm much obleeged to you, ma'am, and hope you are quite well."

"I should be more at ease, sister of Scotland, had not a rumour reached our royal ear that you had assumed our arms, and presumed to doubt our just right to them."

"Who ever said so is a story-teller. I can take my oath I never dreamt of such a thing. What should I do with your arms, when I have got very good ones of my own?"

This reply conquered the gravity of the circle who heard it, and even the representative of the maiden queen could not restrain her laughter.

"What are they laughing at?" demanded Mrs. Maclaurin. "I think they're not over-mannerly."

"Forgive my mirth, fair sister, and answer me touching the report of your representing yourself as likely soon to inherit our crown. We hope your Majesty can clear yourself from that and other stains on your fame."

"What on earth does she mane?" asked Mrs. Maclaurin. "I never wanted her crown, and can have one of my own, if I like it."

This reply renewed the laughter of all the circle.

"Most injured innocence! how have you been defamed!" said Mr. Rhymer, turning up his eyes.

"Only tell me by who, and I'll bring an action against him, or my name isn't Mary Maclaurin."

The laughter now became general, and the victim to this mystification, no longer able to control her feelings, tore her mask from her face, revealing as she did so remarkably plain a countenance, flushed to nearly a crimson hue from heat and anger, and which appeared to still greater disadvantage from the bandeau of diamonds that encircled her brow beneath the black velvet cap, which likewise was enriched with brilliants.

"I'm not ashamed to show my face, I can tell you," said the wrathful Mrs. Maclaurin. "I'm no more a Queen of Scotland than you are of England. I guessed from the first that you were not disposed to be polite, for all you pretended to speak so civilly; but I don't care a button for you all put together. Ay, ye may laugh, but it's my belief I could buy ye all. I'll count hundreds, ay, and thousands, too, with the best of ye any day in the week, and honestly come by, too."

"Oh! madam, do let us retire; pray, come away," urged the embarrassed and alarmed Mrs. Bernard.

"I'll do no such thing. I have as good a right, and better, too, to be here than they have."

"Good gracious, Sophia! what has happened to

your dress?" exclaimed Lady Wellerby, as that lady, leaning on the arm of Mr. Webworth, approached.

"It's only the black that has come off Othello's arm," replied Lady Sophia.

"Capital fun. Ha, ha, ha!" said Lord Fitzwarren, laughing loudly at the misadventure of his future sister-in-law. "Why, Sophy, you look as if you had been up the chimney, and poor Webworth is the black-amoor washed nearly white."

"Do let us return home, Louisa, I am quite fatigued; and you, dearest, look as if you were equally so," said Mrs. Sydney.

"Yes, mother, I shall be glad to find myself at home," answered Louisa, languidly; and both ladies, escorted by Strathern, left the *bal masqué*.

"Why are you so silent, so dispirited, dearest?" whispered Strathern, as they descended the stairs. "You are ill, I fear: if so, tell me — let me go for medical advice. Your arm trembles — yes, you *are* ill, Louisa, and you have concealed it from me!"

"I shall be better to-morrow—I am only fatigued," replied Miss Sydney; but there was something so wholly different in her tone and manner, that Strathern felt still more alarmed. He accompanied Mrs. Sydney and her daughter to their abode, but still Louisa remained silent, only replying by monosyllables to the reiterated questions of her mother and lover, but refusing to have recourse to medical advice.

When he handed them from their carriage, no pressure of the hand marked Louisa's recognition of his own warm one ; no smile, however faint, acknowledged her sense of his tenderness and anxiety for her health ; and. when he tore himself away from her, he felt more wretched than even her indisposition could account for.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"When men, to gain some selfish end,
To plot and scheme will condescend,
Though high may be their rank and birth,
They'll find the low-born of the earth
Presume no more respect to pay
Than if the high were low as they;
And though bright honour may be fled,
And ev'ry noble impulse dead
Within the breast where love of gold
Has fix'd its strong debasing hold,
Yet pride may live to writhe with pain,
When humbled thus by love of gain."

Lord Alexander Beaulieu continued to make a rapid progress in the good graces of Mrs. Maclaurin, notwithstanding that she occasionally felt annoyed and half offended at the pertinacity with which he resisted her entreaties to be introduced to his friends and acquaintances, and at the evident dislike he had to exhibit himself in public with her. He always found some excuse for refusing to accompany her in her *giros*, or to give her his arm in any of her promenades;

nevertheless, though vexed and mortified at the moment when these refusals occurred, she had too much value for a lord—and a good-looking one, too—to quarrel with him. He dined with her frequently, taking care, however, to assist her in inspecting the *menu*, a task which she was totally incapable of performing alone, and he daily acquired such influence over her, that she now seldom took any step, or formed any plan, without consulting him. This daily intercourse, while it served to reveal all her peculiarities and defects, brought so few good qualities to light, that Lord Alexander Beaulieu's dislike to her rather increased than diminished. He was as much shocked and disgusted at her gross selfishness, and unblushing self-indulgence, as if *he* were exempt from similar failings, while her vulgarity was looked on by him as a sufficient cause, if not excuse, for any ill-treatment she might hereafter receive at his hands. Mrs. Maclaurin might have possessed all the faults he had discovered in her character, and even more, without incurring the sense of loathing he experienced towards her, had she, like so many of his aristocratic friends, been able to shade them by the gossamer veil of conventional good-breeding and refinement of manner; but the absence of this peculiar attribute of polished society, not the existence of the defects themselves, shocked and disgusted him, and he believed

himself vastly her superior, because his selfishness was not so openly revealed.

While Lord Alexander Beaulieu sat in his room one day, his door was opened, and, to his surprise, the *femme de chambre* of Mrs. Maclaurin entered. "I did know you vas alone, milor," said she. "I have vatched great many days to find you alone, for I vant very moche, very moche indeed, to speak vid you."

"You do me honour, mademoiselle—permit me," and the *roué* lordling seized the hand of the coquettish French woman and kissed her.

"Have done, milor, have done. I not come for you to make lofe," observed the *femme de chambre*, disengaging herself from the grasp of Lord Alexander. "I come for *de choses bien graves*—I come to tell you dat I know you vish to marry *madame*, and dat if you make it my interest you *sall* marry her. Are ve safe? Vill nobody come?"

"Retire into that chamber, mademoiselle, and I will ring the bell to give orders that I am not at home to any one."

Mademoiselle Justine did as she was told, and Lord Alexander, having dismissed his servant with instructions to keep off all visiters, resumed his *tête-à-tête* with her.

"Madame is too uglee, and too stoopeed and vulgaire, milor, for any person *comme il faut* to tink of

marrying her, except for her moneys. *Elle est un imbécille*, a fool in some tings, and I can make her do vat I like. She sall marry you, milor, *if I like* it; if I *not* like it, she *sall not* marry you."

"You are too *aimable*, too pretty, charming Justine," and again Lord Alexander attempted to embrace the *femme de chambre*, who, however, resisted, and, putting him aside, resumed—

"Do not interrupt me, milor; I do not vant de compliments; I vant to come to de point at vonce. If you vant to marry madame, you moste have Justine for your friend."

"To be sure, my charming Justine. Who would not be proud to have such a friend? I *do* wish to marry Mrs. Maclaurin, and if you will assist me in the affair you will not find me ungrateful. *Au reste*, madame does not show any disinclination to favour my suit. She seems more anxious to become my wife than I am to give her that title."

"You say true, milor; she does vish to be miladi; she lofes de milors; *mais, if I* do not vish it, I know de way to break off de affair at vonce."

"But you would not be so cruel, my pretty Justine. Ah! if madame was only half as pretty as you are," and Lord Alexander threw as much admiration into his countenance as possible.

"Dat is not now de question, milor. De question

is, how much money vill you give me if I arrange vid madame to marry you?"

"You shall find me all generosity, my pretty Justine. Who would not be generous to such a dear, charming creature? And as soon as I am married, I will give you whatever sum you require."

"All de men, milor, promise de vomen every ting ven dey vant to get any ting, but forget it after."

"I swear to you."

"I do not value de svearing, milor; vat I vant is a bond—yes, a *parchemin* bond—*signed* and *sealed*, by vich you vill engage to pay me five tousand pounds in von year after you are married to madame. Moste vomen in my place vould demand trec times as moche, but I am more *traitable*, and vill be satisfied vid a leetle."

"Five thousand pounds is a great deal of money," replied Lord Alexander, looking grave. "I should have thought, my pretty Justine, that five hundred would have been quite enough to demand. After all, *ma belle*, Mrs. Maclaurin is not indifferent on this matter. I really believe that such is her attachment to me, that not even your influence, great as I am willing to believe it, could prevent her following her own inclinations."

"Ah! you tink so, milor. Ha! ha! ha! *Nous verrons*—you sall see. You not know madame so vell as I do, *mais vous verrez*. *Au reste*, I must be

gone; I have not de time to stay and make bargains; but ven it is too late, you vill be sorry you not make me your friend, dat is all; so, adieu."

"Do not be in such a hurry to leave me, charming Justine. You really are so pretty that I can think of nothing but you while you are present;" and Lord Alexander Beaulieu attempted to put his arm round her waist.

"No, milor, I vill have no nonsense. It is all very vell to say I am so *charmante*, but, *malgré tout cela*, it is very plain you tink more of saving money dan of my looks. Five tousand pounds is but a little sum to pay for twenty tousand a year; and you sall find if I am not your friend, madame vill never marry you, for all you are *un si joli garçon*."

"But is there no way, Justine, in which we could arrange this matter without the trouble and publicity of having a bond drawn up?"

"Yes, dere is vou vay, and very easy vay too; give me de five tousand pounds at vonce, and dere need be no bond—no *parchemin*."

"This is impossible, Justine. I have not so much money."

"*Comment donc*, milor? You are a milor *Anglais*, vho all de vorld say are so riche, and not have five tousand pounds! I am glad you told me dis—very glad indeed—for now I know it, how can I let my *pauvre maîtresse* marry a man who is so poor? No,

I must tell her dat you only vant to marry her for her money, and dat you vould spend it all, and leave her vidout anyting for herself. I vill say, 'no more fine dresses and diamonds—no more expensive *déjeúners, dîners, soupés, et vins rares*,' and you sall see she tell you she cannot marry you."

"But if I inform her that you are a mercenary person, who turned against me because I would not buy your good offices at the extravagant price you demanded, your mistress, *ma belle*, may be disposed to give you your *congé*, an event I should so much regret, for it would be a great comfort to me, Justine, with so plain a wife as madame will make, to have so very pretty a person as you in the house."

"Ah! *je vous voyais venir de loin*, milor. But it vill not do, *vous vous trompez*, milor. I tell you vonce more, *you* never can hurt *me*, but I can turn madame so much against *you*, dat she sall not care one pin for you in two days if I vill it. Now I have said de trut, I sall not stay any longer, so *bon jour*."

"I can refuse you nothing, *charmante* Justine; you do just as you will with me. I never could resist a pretty woman in my life."

"And I suppose, milor, you tink de pretty woman cannot resist you." And Justine laughed, and looked archly at Lord Alexander Beaulieu.

"Then it is quite understood," said he, somewhat embarrassed by the *air moquer* with which she regarded

him, "that now I have consented to your extravagant conditions, I may count on your assistance in carrying my views on madame into effect."

"*Certainement*, ven you have sign de bond, milor, but not before. I have von friend here, very clever man. He vill draw it, and make it all right. *En attendant*, I just tell you, milor, dat I like pretty tings, and *gâteaux* and *bonbons* very moche. *On dit, que les petits cadeaux entretiennent l'amitié*, and I do believe de proverb is very true. I need say no more, and so adieu, milor."

The easy assurance of the Frenchwoman surprised and somewhat embarrassed Lord Alexander Beaulieu for the moment, but, quickly recovering his presence of mind, and thinking it right to affect a tender gallantry of manner towards the *femme de chambre*, he took her hand, pressed it, and attempted to kiss her.

"No, milor—no, no, have done; I not vant your caresses, and I will not permit dem. Keep all dem for madame—she, *pauvre femme*, may value dem; I do not." And, disengaging herself from his grasp, Justine glided from the room, first taking care to ascertain that there was no one in the ante-room to notice her egress from it.

"Hang the impudent and cunning Jezabel!" said he to himself. "There is a lurking devil in her eye, that tells me it would be unwise to make her my

enemy, and she most decidedly would become so were I to refuse compliance with her conditions. Five thousand pounds! What an extortion! Why it is the general portion allotted in marriage settlements for the younger children of the aristocracy. Many a Lord Henry and Lady Mary, bred up in affluence, and surrounded in infancy by all the gauds of splendour, have no more to depend on; yet this impudent sticker of pins, and inheritress of cast-off finery, will be content with no less for her services; that is, not for forwarding my marriage with her odious mistress, but simply for not interfering to prevent it. My union with that woman is a bitter pill to swallow, however well gilded it may be. Never did I see such a creature. But I must not reflect on her, for the more I think the less do I find my courage equal to support this hateful marriage; and yet, if it does not take place, I shall be left penniless. I must go to her, and bear as best I may all the *bêtises* and vulgarities she is always sure to utter."

"I am so glad you are come," said Mrs. Maclaurin, as Lord Alexander Beaulieu entered her *salon*. "Look here. At last I have an opportunity of entering into fashionable society. I'm so glad. Here's the card," and she extended one to her visitor, who perused it with no peculiar pleasure. "Why, positively, my lord, one might suppose from your long face that you were sorry, instead of being glad, that I

am invited to this ball. Mrs. Bernard says it is to be a masked one, and I dote on masquerades. I have been to two public ones at the Opera House in London, where there were such crowds, one could hardly move about, and it was delightful. Every one speaking to every one, without knowing a bit who each other were. That's what I like; no ceremony—all fun and gaiety. To be sure, when, after supper, all the men got tipsy, and pushed me about, it was rather alarming."

Lord Alexander recoiled in horror at the thought of his future wife having figured at a *bal masqué* at the Opera House, and his countenance revealed some portion of his disgust.

"Don't you like masquerades?" asked the lady.

"Not particularly, and more especially public ones."

"How strange! Why, what a funny chap you must be! Well, for my part, I dote on them. You should have seen me at those balls. I went to one as a sultan."

"A sultana, madam," said Mrs. Bernard, timidly.

"Well, sultan or sultana, where's the difference, I should like to know? It's all one, for both wear fine clothes and loose trousers, all spangled, and jewels—ay, and a dagger in the waistband."

Lord Alexander found it difficult to look grave, and Mrs. Bernard appeared really distressed at this exposure of the ignorance of Mrs. Maclaurin.

"At the other masquerade I appeared as the Queen of Sheba."

"As the Queen of Sheba!" reiterated Lord Alexander in astonishment.

"Yes, as the Queen of Sheba, for that gave me an opportunity of wearing all my diamonds; and, I assure you, that no lady at the masquerade, whatever her grandeur might be, wore one quarter so many. The people did nothing but stare at and admire me. One said I was the Queen of Diamonds, and a trump-card—wasn't that a pretty compliment?"

"But, seriously, I hope you do not intend to go to this *bal costume*."

"What do you call it? A ball cost chew me, eh?"

"Yes, a *bal costumé*."

"Mind, Mrs. Bernard, you don't forget a ball cost chew me. What a funny name!—ha! ha! ha!—it makes me laugh, whether I will or no. But why do you hope I won't go? Where's the objection? Haven't I been shut up here like a prisoner, only wearing my jewels before you? and now here's an opportunity to put 'em all on and astonish the natives, as they say in England, or at least astonish all the company that will be present."

"I am sorry you have set your heart upon attending this *bal*. It will be by no means select; and, as you have no acquaintances at Rome, you will not, I fear, find it agreeable."

"But won't it be a capital opportunity to *make* plenty of acquaintances? Sure, can't I speak to every one I meet, the same as I did at the masquerades at the Opera House in London?"

"Such a proceeding in a lady would not be deemed decorous."

"Oh, hang decorum! When a woman has a fortune like mine, she needn't bother herself about decorum. And where's the harm of my amusing myself? I don't mean to say any thing bad to any one; and, when people see my jewels, they'll guess well enough that it could only be a rich person like me that could afford to have such, and they'll not be sorry for my making their acquaintance; besides, you'll come with me, and, leaning on your arm, I have nothing to dread."

Lord Alexander Beaulieu positively changed colour at this proposal. What, exhibit himself in public with this vulgar woman, who would be sure to render herself the most conspicuous person present! The very thought of it shocked him, but, not knowing what excuse to make at the moment, and determining to get out of the scrape when the time came, he merely bowed, and said, "Of course I shall be proud and happy to attend you."

"Now, there's a good creature; I'm so glad you make no more objections. Do you know, my lord, that I am the strangest creature in the world. I can't

bear not to have my own way in everything, but when I have—and I always take care that *I do have*—I let every body do as he or she pleases; that's my plan, and I think it's a very good one. Mrs. Bernard, go and ask Justine for the case I was looking at this morning; the small case, I mean."

When Mrs. Bernard withdrew, Mrs. Maclaurin put on one of her most winning smiles, and, turning to Lord Alexander Beaulieu, said, "I have sent her for an elegant present I mean to give you; it's a large diamond pin, and will look beautiful in your cravat."

Something of the feeling of a gentleman crossed the lordling's mind for a moment, and sent the blood to his cheek, while he uttered something about his unwillingness to accept so valuable a gift, and reminded her that he wore only the most simple and least costly shirt-pins.

"And more's the pity. Indeed, ever since I first saw you, I have been thinking how much more rich and elegant you would look if you wore a large diamond, instead of that little, plain, insignificant pearl, that's no bigger than a young pea. You must accept my gift, for if you don't I'll think you don't like me."

"There is but one gift, dear Mrs. Maclaurin, that I covet, and that, what would I not give to attain?"

"What on earth can it be? Tell me."

"Your hand, your precious self, most charming of women." And Lord Alexander Beaulieu bent one knee on the *tabouret*, and took the hand of the lady.

"Ah! now, are you in earnest?"

"Never so much so in my life. I have loved you from the first moment that I beheld your fair face, and have longed to lay myself at your feet. Say, may I hope that . . ."

"Hope! To be sure you may, and why not? There's not the least objection in life; sure, are not you a lord, and a fine good-looking one into the bargain, and what more could any reasonable woman require?"

"Then you will be mine?"

"Faith, and that I will, as sure as my name is Mol—that is Mary Maclaurin. I have a good ten thousand pounds a-year—don't owe a shilling—have plenty of jewels—and am my own mistress."

"Talk not of money, dearest of women! It is but as dross in my eyes, when compared with you."

"We must not despise it for all that, for I know what good it can do, and how foolish the best of us look without it."

"But when may I hope to call you mine—to be blessed with this dear hand?" and again he pressed her to his breast, but, unfortunately, at that moment, Mrs. Bernard entered the room with the small morocco case in her hand, and, seeing Mrs. Maclaurin

in the act of being embraced by Lord Alexander Beaulieu, she suddenly turned away, and retreated from the room.

"Call her back, call her back!" exclaimed Mrs. Maclaurin.

"Why should I, dearest of women?" replied Lord Alexander.

"Oh! she will imagine all manner of abominable things—indeed she will, for you know not what sly, designing, artful creatures *dams de company* are."

"She can only imagine the fact, that *I* am in love with you, and that *you* do not quite hate me. There is surely no crime in this."

"Why, perhaps not; if she knew that what she saw was in consequence of your having proposed to me, and my having accepted you. But, until she does know this fact, she must think, and for the matter of that so must every proper woman, that it was very wrong of me to let you kiss me."

To the surprise of her future lord, Mrs. Maclaurin looked as much embarrassed and as shy as if, instead of a coarse and vulgar person, she was a modest and refined one.

"I could not imagine that you were such a prude, my charming friend," observed Lord Alexander.

"Sure you don't call it being a prude to be ashamed out of my life"—and the deep flush of red that covered her cheeks, and mounted to her very forehead,

proved more than any words could have done that the innate sentiment of feminine modesty peculiar to her countrywomen of every class had not left the coarse breast of the vulgar Irishwoman—"at being caught with the arms of any man who is not my husband round my waist, and his lips pressed to my cheek."

"How strange!" exclaimed Lord Alexander Beaulieu.

"What is strange?" demanded Mrs. Maclaurin.

"That you, my dear creature, who are neither afraid nor ashamed to venture to public masquerades at the Opera-house, among persons of the most degraded of your sex, and least respectable of mine, should be so shocked and embarrassed at being found by your *dame de compagnie* encircled in my arms."

"It is you that are strange, my lord, not to see the difference. I see no harm in amusing myself as best I can. If genteel company won't make my acquaintance—and they ought to be ashamed of themselves for refusing, when I never did anything that could come against my character—sure I must go somewhere for a little pleasure. I didn't know that all the people at the masquerades were no better than they should be; but I *do* know, and have been taught from my cradle, that a decent woman ought not to let any man, except her father or brother, kiss her till she is a wife, and, therefore, you must never attempt to take

this liberty till we are married; and I must tell Mrs. Bernard at once that we are engaged. Well, won't it be a great comfort to have a husband, and not require *dams de company!* I thought that they always would be ready to amuse one, to make one laugh when out of spirits, in short, never to let one be dull or gloomy; but this isn't the case at all; and as for opening and shutting the doors and windows, poking the fire, picking up one's handkerchief, and bringing anything from one room to another, a page can do it as well, and, in a beautiful dress, would look much more elegant than any of those old frumps of *dams de company.* How nice it would be for me to have a little black page, with a white turban and diamond ear-rings—wouldn't it?"

"Charming! But you must now think of more serious things. When may I hope to call you mine?"

"Sure, you needn't be in such a hurry."

"Who wouldn't be in a hurry to possess such a treasure as you?"

"Won't you ask the consent of your parents?"

"My father is dead, and my mother, dear, easy creature, will receive with kindness any one I present to her as my wife. My brother's consent I have no occasion to ask, and he will, I am certain, rejoice at my marrying so delightful a person as yourself."

"Is your brother married?"

"No, nor likely to be."

"He is a marquis, isn't he?"

"Yes."

"Then if he were to die, you would be a marquis?"

"Certainly; and you, my charming friend, what an elegant marchioness you would make!"

"Who knows?—life is uncertain. Here to-day and gone to-morrow. We are cut down like grass, and not all one's gold and diamonds can save one, when once death comes. I thought of all this when I saw poor Mr. Maclaurin in his last hours. There he was, like a flower drooping and fading, with his red silk nightcap and his pale face. He had thousands and thousands of pounds, yet Death took him off just as easily as if he hadn't a guinea. I sometimes think of all this when I am between asleep and awake, and the poor old wizen countenance of him seems before my eyes."

"You must not dwell on such painful subjects. You really grow quite pathetic, my sweet friend."

"Well, then, ring the bell for Mrs. Bernard."

When that lady entered, Mrs. Maclaurin addressed her as follows:—

"You mustn't think, Mrs. Bernard, that there's anything wrong between my lord and me. We are going to be married, and then I won't want you any more, as his lordship will be plenty of company for me."

Poor Mrs. Bernard curtseyed, but spoke not; and even the selfish Lord Alexander Beaulieu, albeit unused to attend much to the feelings of others, felt a momentary sentiment of pity, as he marked the sudden paleness of her cheek at this unexpected intimation that she was to be thrown out of bread.

"Give me the case I sent you for," said Mrs. Maclaurin; and, opening it, she drew forth a magnificent diamond pin, and handed it to Lord Alexander Beaulieu. "Wear this for my sake, and mind you never part with it. I'd like to have a line or two engraved on it, such as—

'When this you see,
Remember me.'"

Lord Alexander felt embarrassed by the costly gift, and its being made in the presence of Mrs. Bernard did not help to reassure him. Little as he was remarkable for delicacy, some portion of the *fierté* of gentle blood sent a blush to his cheek; and the man, who had not scrupled to take in his friends by wagers, and by selling them bad horses, knowing them to be so—nay, who had, while loathing the woman before him, plotted and intrigued to wed and possess himself of her fortune without any conscientious self-reproach or shame, felt abashed at receiving this gift.

"Give me a sixpence," said Mrs. Maclaurin, holding out her hand. "You know they say it's unlucky to

give or take a present with a point, unless the receiver gives a bit of money in return."

"I must then offer you a Roman coin, for a sixpence it would be difficult to find at Rome," and Lord Alexander drew from his waistcoat-pocket a small silver paul.

"And now," resumed the lady, "that we have settled more weighty concerns, and arranged everything about our marriage, you must tell me in what dress I had best go to the masked ball. I have been thinking that if you will go as the famous Brian Borough, the great Irish king, and I as his queen, it would be very elegant."

"I must positively decline assuming any character. It is considered very vulgar for gentlemen to do so, and, though most anxious to meet your wishes on every point, this is wholly impossible."

Mrs. Maclaurin felt and looked disappointed; but her respect for a lord checked her expressing her annoyance, and she submitted with a tolerably good grace to his decision.

"But you'll go with me to the masquerade, won't you?" said she, putting on what she imagined to be her most gracious and captivating air, but which her affianced husband considered to be her worst, as the assumption of winning smiles in so very plain a face rendered it in his opinion more disagreeable.

"Yes, I will attend you, though I hardly think it prudent in your peculiar position," and Lord Alexander Beaulieu looked grave.

"My peculiar position!" reiterated the lady. "Why what is there peculiar in my position, except my having more money than other widows?"

"You are here a total stranger, wholly unprotected, no female acquaintances, young, and fair."—It was some time ere he could bring himself to add the last word, so sensible was he of the falsehood it contained. —"If seen attended by a young man, a thousand evil reports would be circulated to your disadvantage, which would, when we are married, tend to prevent your reception in that society in which, as my wife, as Lady Alexander Beaulieu, you will have a right to appear. This is the reason why I have denied myself the pleasure of escorting you about at Rome, and resisted your desire to present some of my friends to you. Once married, you shall be presented to the best society; but, until that happy event takes place, respect for your reputation must preclude me from appearing in public with you."

"Ah! now the murder is out; I understand the whole thing. I was bothered to guess why you were so shy about never going anywhere with me; and, to tell the truth, I suspected it was because I had not a title that you did not like to be seen with me."

"Our marriage will remove every obstacle to your brilliant reception in the highest circles — Majesty itself will smile on you."

"Oh, how elegant! and what a court-dress I'll wear! I'll put on every jewel I have in the world."

"You will, perhaps, give up going to this masquerade?"

"No; but I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll go as the Queen of Scots, because, as a queen, I can wear so many diamonds, and you can be near me without absolutely appearing to belong to me. Isn't this a capital plan?"

Glad to be excused attendance on her, and, well satisfied with the progress he had made towards accomplishing his marriage, Lord Alexander Beaulieu offered no objection to this last scheme, and left Mrs. Maclaurin in high spirits at the prospect of soon becoming a lady.

CHAPTER XIX.

"And hearts—the warm, the fond, the true—
May live to suffer, and to rue
The hour when first suspicion came
To weaken faith and whisper blame,
And fondly wish, but wish in vain,
Lost peace they could once more regain."

Never had the fair Louisa Sydney sought her pillow with so much pain and doubt torturing her heart as on the night of her return from the *bal costumé*. These were new guests in her breast, and this, their first visit, made her more sensible than ever of the power of the little winged god, whose influence hitherto had only brought her happiness. Mrs. Sydney questioned her as to the cause of her altered looks and manners, but when the plea of headache—that so often-resorted-to apology for heartache—was urged, she did not doubt its truth, and believing that a night's repose would restore her daughter to her usual state of health, she left her to seek it, imprinting a

maternal kiss on her brow. For a moment, Louisa was disposed to throw herself on the bosom of her parent, and avow all that was agitating her soul, but pride—that evil passion, which exercises such dominion over its victims—restrained the impulse and sealed her lips, though, when she heard the door close after her mother, and listened to her retreating footsteps, she regretted not having told her the cause of her chagrin.

"What ails my darling Miss Sydney?" said Nurse Murray, for by that appellation was the old and faithful attendant of the young lady called.

"Only a headache, my good Murray. But why will you persist in sitting up for me? You know I can't bear it, for at your age you should be in your bed hours ago."

"There's no use in being in bed, darling, if one can't sleep, and I never can unless I have seen your dear head laid on your pillow. I have prepared a *lait de poul* for you, and have taken care to get a new-laid egg and the freshest milk to make it. As your dear head aches, I will add a spoonful of orange-flower to it, and it will serve to compose you nicely."

"Not to-night, good Murray. I can take nothing to-night."

There was something tremulous in the voice of Louisa, and a sort of impatience in the gesture with

which she waved away the proffered cup, that convinced the old nurse that it was not headache alone which produced both these unusual symptoms.

"Surely, Miss Sydney, you will not grieve your poor old Murray by refusing what she has taken such pains to prepare for you?" said the nurse in her most bland and coaxing accents.

"Indeed, Murray, I—I could not swallow"—and here a burst of passionate tears broke the sentence.

"Good heavens! what is—what *can* be the matter, darling of my heart? I never saw you weep so before. O! tell your own poor old Murray what has happened to produce these tears?" and the nurse, moved by the sorrow of her young mistress, began herself to weep.

"Nothing—I shall be better by and by—I am fatigued," and Louisa began undressing, assisted by Murray.

"The time was, darling," said the old woman, "that you had no care, no secret hidden from me, but now—" and the nurse wept afresh.

"It is very absurd, and my mother would censure me for paying the least attention to such an incident, but to-night, at the ball, a figure disguised as a conjurer followed me through the rooms, hovering so near that his whispers, though inaudible to others, could be heard by me, warning me, in the most emphatic, though mysterious terms, to beware of *him* whom I most trusted, for that he sought me but for my

wealth, to fill up the breach made in his own by his reckless extravagance and secret indulgence in libertine pursuits. I ought to have lent a deaf ear to this caution—to this vile calumny, for such I am persuaded it is—and I am displeased with myself for allowing it to make the least impression on me."

"Ah! well a-day, darling, none of us know what is best for us. Who can say but that this warning may have been vouchsafed by Providence to give you time to think—to become better acquainted with Mr. Strathern?—for though Heaven forbid that *I* should say a word, or even entertain a doubt of his being, as I hope he is, one of the most worthy gentlemen in the whole world, still a caution, coming from whoever it may, ought never to be slighted."

"Yes, Murray, in some cases, but this is not one of these cases; and coming, too, from some vile slanderer, whose identity is concealed beneath a mask, ought to be not only slighted but spurned; and Mr. Strathern's character stands so deservedly high, that those who know him, and more especially her whom he has chosen to be his wife, should scorn any anonymous slander uttered against him."

All the generosity of Miss Sydney's nature was excited into action by Murray's worldly-minded view of the warning given to her, and her own doubts faded away for the moment in her indignation that another should entertain similar ones. Nurse Murray was

too well acquainted with the character of her whom from infancy she had never lost sight of, not to perceive in a moment that she stood on dangerous ground when she was endeavouring to confirm the newly-awakened suspicions of her young lady. She, therefore, adroitly observed, "You are quite right, darling, not to believe anything against Mr. Strathern—and so I was going to add, if you had allowed me to proceed—but one may pause and take time, and look more attentively into the character and conduct of a gentleman on whom one's happiness in this life is to depend, without positively believing anything to his disadvantage. If he be found to come out pure and faultless from such an examination, he deserves to be still more valued, and a service, instead of an injury, is rendered him by it; but if—and alas! dear young lady, how few, how very few, so come out—why then, surely, one would have reason to be, indeed, thankful for having escaped being wedded to such a man."

"I weighed and examined the character and disposition of Mr. Strathern before I accepted his proffered hand, and having so done, I take shame to myself, Murray, for having for a moment listened to aught against him. It was unworthy of me, and I am almost vexed with you, Murray, for your well-meant but ill-timed pertinacity, in urging me to talk on this subject. What would the noble-minded Mr. Strathern think if he knew I could doubt his worth, because—for Heaven

knows what motive, but certainly for no good one—a slanderer, in the security of a mask, has presumed to calumniate him!"

Louisa Sydney's eyes flashed with more than ordinary brilliancy, and her cheeks became suffused with a rosy blush of indignation against herself, and something approaching to anger against the old nurse, on whom none of the changes in her youthful mistress's mood ever passed unnoticed.

"Don't be angry with your poor faithful old nurse," said Murray. "Forgive her for thinking that no gentleman, whatever may be his merit, can be deserving of such a treasure as her own darling. Indeed, I can't help, dear Miss Sydney, thinking so; not that I would for the world disparage Mr. Strathern, whom I think the handsomest and noblest-looking gentleman I ever saw, except your dear and excellent father, but something I once heard came suddenly into my mind when you mentioned the warning at the masquerade, and that obliged me to advise caution—only a *leetle* caution, 'for that *can* do no harm,' said I to myself."

"And what did you hear, Murray?" asked Miss Sydney, the demon Suspicion reviving in her breast, and her cheeks turning pale with emotion.

"Why, indeed, my dear young lady, so little *was* said, that when I have tried to recall the exact words, they seemed to have much less meaning than they struck me to convey when I heard them spoken, for,

when I did, they made a painful impression on me."

"Tell me the precise words, Murray, and let *me* judge of their signification," said Miss Sydney, with unusual impatience of look and manner.

"I was chatting with Lady Melcombe's own woman, a most respectable person, and she said, 'So, Mrs. Murray, I hear your young lady is engaged to be married to Mr. Strathern?'"

"Can't you come to the point, my good Murray, without repeating all that Lady Melcombe's *femme de chambre* said?" urged Louisa Sydney, somewhat pettishly.

"Well, miss, I answered, 'I make it a point never to speak of family affairs. Marriages are sometimes broken off, Mrs. Bloxham, and therefore it's always wiser not to talk of them until they have taken place.'

"'Very true,' replied Mrs. Bloxham, 'and for the matter of that, Mrs. Murray, there may be *some* marriages'—and she laid great stress on the word some—'that it would be better never *should* take place. Your ladies did not know Mr. Strathern in England, did they?'

"'*No*,' said I.

"'I *thought not*,' replied she. 'Well, well, least said is soonest mended;' and she shook her head, and looked very gravely, and there ended the conversation."

Louisa Sydney attempted to laugh as the nurse concluded her account of the conversation with Mrs. Bloxham, but the effort was not a successful one, and she felt angry at observing, by the unchanged gravity of the nurse, that *she* thought so.

"And so this was all you heard, my good Murray?"

"Yes, my dear young lady; and perhaps I was wrong to let it take such a hold of my mind; but Mrs. Bloxham looked so wise and deep, so exactly as if she knew *more* than she said, and shook her head in such a way, that I could not help thinking, God forgive me if I was wrong! that there must be something bad to be told, and I was longing to ask her; for when the happiness of my own dear young lady might depend on it, I naturally would have given anything to hear all she knew. But, then, I thought it was better for me to ask no questions, for she might, after all, perhaps, know nothing, and..."

"You were perfectly right, Murray, and acted much more prudently and circumspectly than I have done in listening to even a supposition that anything disadvantageous of Mr. Strathern could be known."

"Surely, Miss Sydney, a little curiosity in a young lady, when it relates to her future husband, is very allowable and natural. Many ladies have been saved from marriages that would have made them wretched, by having listened to the relation of circumstances with

which they were before unacquainted; and had they not encouraged the persons who disclosed such facts, they never would have heard them."

Murray looked so sapient while uttering this long-winded truism, that under other circumstances her young lady would have been tempted to laugh, but, however she tried to make light of the warning given to her at the ball, and the insinuation conveyed by Mrs. Bloxham to Murray, she could not shake off the painful impression made on her mind by both; and Suspicion, that fiend who has poisoned the happiness of so many, still lurked in her breast, banishing from it the peace and happiness that had previously reigned there. She, however, assumed an air of tranquillity she was far from possessing, and, having dismissed the old nurse with a kind good night, was glad to find herself alone, to weep unwitnessed the tears that pride restrained in the presence of her attendant.

Louisa Sydney had been for some time so happy, so inexpressibly content with herself and others, but, above all, she had abandoned her heart so completely to the affection inspired in it by Strathern, that the doubt which had now been instilled into her mind rendered her wretched, by the contrast of her present feelings with those of the preceding hours. What would she not have given to banish from her memory the insidious whisper listened to at the ball, and to be restored to the blissful security previously enjoyed!

Was it, could it be possible, that the refined, the noble-minded Strathern, he to whom she had given her whole heart, could be the heartless libertine, the selfish and calculating spendthrift, who sought her fortune to repair his own? Then would come the recollection of those fond looks in which his very soul seemed to beam forth as he gazed on her face, and those tender expressions in which a true passion, free from the hyperbole and exaggeration in which a counterfeited love would seek to deceive, and a conviction of the sincerity of her affianced husband would again enter her breast. But, alas! when once suspicion has found entrance, it is not easily to be wholly dislodged, and again and again would the hateful withering words of the conjurer come back to chase away returning confidence and peace.

It was broad daylight ere Louisa Sydney found a respite from sorrow in repose. "Tired Nature's sweet restorer" at last descended on her tear-stained lids, but, while he wrapped her senses in sweet forgetfulness, her bosom still heaved with struggling sobs, and her feverish hand and throbbing temples bore evidence of the havoc made by the painful feelings of the last few hours on her delicate frame. When she appeared at the breakfast-table the next morning, her pale cheek, heavy eyes, and languid step, alarmed her parent. In vain were the most delicate breakfast-cakes and chocolate presented to her—she could do no

more than taste them to please her anxious mother, for all appetite had deserted her. She resisted the desire of Mrs. Sydney to send for a physician, declaring that she only required quiet and repose to recover from the fatigues of the previous night, alleging that the light, heat, and noise, so far exceeding what she had ever been accustomed to, had overcome her. Mrs. Sydney was too well versed in the mysteries of woman's heart not to suspect that the alteration in her daughter originated in some other cause than those assigned, and that some misunderstanding, some lover's quarrel, had produced the effect she witnessed; and yet Strathern's temper was so mild, so equal, that she could hardly think *he* could be to blame, so she waited with impatience for his usual visit, that she might judge by the meeting of the lovers whether or not any coldness had interrupted the harmony always previously existing between them.

"Mr. Strathern sent this morning to inquire how you had passed the night, dearest," said Mrs. Sydney.

"Did he?" answered Louisa listlessly.

"He was really alarmed and unhappy about you last night. I never before saw him so much put out of his way."

The fair invalid made no comment, and her mother resumed:

"It is easy to see that Mr. Strathern has not been

accustomed to live much in the society of delicate women, for, if he had, he would not have been so much alarmed at your slight indisposition."

Mrs. Sydney could not have uttered a more unfortunate remark, for it instantly brought back to the recollection of her daughter the disgusting revelation made by the conjurer at the masquerade relative to certain propensities of her affianced husband, and the colour rose to her cheek, and her eyes for a moment flashed with unusual animation. Now, of all the evils attributed by the conjurer to Strathern, the allusion to libertinism was the one which had most shocked and displeased Miss Sydney; yet, strange to say, it was the one which found the most easy credence in her mind. The often-reiterated assertions of Nurse Murray of the fallibility of mankind had not failed to produce a bad effect on Louisa. Hitherto she had learned to consider Strathern as a man apart, and wholly superior to the rest of his sex; and, though at times certain misgivings relative to whether he had, as he often declared, never previously loved, or that he might only have said so to please her, had passed through her mind, she, nevertheless, had believed that which she hoped—that on which much of her happiness depended on believing—namely, that he was one of the few exceptions in the sex against which Nurse Murray so frequently pronounced her denunciation.

who had never formed disreputable *liaisons*, or made impure associations.

This belief had received a severe shock by the disclosure by the conjurer, and deep was the regret and indignation Miss Sydney experienced at the thought of the possibility that he on whom she bestowed her virgin heart, and whom she had looked on as a superior being, must henceforth be viewed as one of the common herd of men, one of those libertines so often anathematized by her good Murray. There was pain, anger, shame, and humiliation in the notion, and these new emotions, which mingled and struggled for the first time in her breast, rendered her really ill. "If he had been ruined, beggared," thought Louisa, "I could have enriched him with all my wealth, nor have wronged him by a suspicion of his having sought my hand only to acquire it. I could have found in his noble and generous nature a thousand excuses for past prodigality, and I would have gloried in retrieving his fortune; but to find him that most disgusting of all created beings, a libertine, accustomed to associate with the worthless of his own sex, and the base and profligate of mine — oh, no! for this blow I was *not* prepared, and it has been too heavy a one for me. No, as mamma said, 'It is easy to see that he has not been used to live much in the society of delicate women.' These were her very words. Alas! how

little could she imagine the recollections they would evoke, the torture they would inflict, by reminding me of what I would fain efface from my memory for ever! Would that I had not gone to that *bal masqué!* —what chagrin should I have escaped had I remained at home! And yet, if, indeed, the conjurer spoke the truth, is it not better that I should know it ere it be too late? But no; it is not, cannot be true that Henry is the hypocrite he represented him — and a most accomplished one he must be to have so carefully concealed from the world the vile pursuits to which he is represented to be addicted. Even Mr. Rhymer, the cynical Mr. Rhymer, who detects every failing and spares none, spoke of him as one of the rare examples in the present day of a young man who had fallen into none of the follies, and resisted all the temptations, that beset persons of his age and fortune, on first entering into the dangerous vortex of fashionable life. What a comfort it is to recal his words! Would that I could forget those of the conjurer! If Henry *be* guiltless of the sin laid to his charge, how do I wrong him by yielding to the unworthy suspicion engendered by the report of the conjurer! If! — if! there is torture in the doubt! How, then, should I ever be able to bear the certainty of it? Could I but discover that he has been maligned, that the person who poured into my ear the representations that have given me such pain had been instigated by some secret motive

to invent the statements, how should I reproach myself for having indulged a doubt, and how look in the face and meet the glance of him I had so wronged? What must he have thought of my altered manner last night?—the indifference, the more than *indifference*, with which I received his anxious attentions when he believed me to be ill. How will he look when he comes to-day? Will not conscience whisper that some discovery has been made, and that my opinion of him is changed? How narrowly will I watch his countenance, and endeavour to ascertain by its expression whether it serves as a mask to conceal vice, or whether it is, as I have hitherto believed it to be, the mirror in which is reflected the noble mind and generous nature I have learned so fondly to appreciate."

"You are thoughtful, dearest," observed Mrs. Sydney, who had, while affecting to read, been anxiously watching the changeful countenance of her daughter, who sat listlessly turning over the leaves of a book, not one line of which had she attempted to peruse.

Louisa awoke from her reverie, then hesitated, and, for a moment, was tempted to reveal to her mother all that was passing in her mind; but the shame of letting her high-minded parent know that she could stoop to suspect her affianced husband on the faith of a masked accuser checked the avowal that hovered on her lips, and, ere she could form an excuse for her

abstraction and sadness, Strathern entered the room. Louisa started and changed colour as he approached. She rather allowed him to take her hand than proffered it to him, as had been her wont; and it trembled so much that her lover, alarmed, and looking tenderly in her face, declared his conviction that she was seriously ill. Her heart was melted by the anxiety he betrayed, and the expression of it was so deep and genuine in his countenance that she could not longer maintain the cold reserve she had assumed—a conviction that, whatever might have been his errors, there was no falsehood in his love for her, stole into her heart as she listened to his fond inquiries, and met his thoughtful eyes fixed on hers with such an expression of unutterable affection; and she abandoned herself to the pleasure of believing herself beloved—as a truant child enjoys a few brief minutes of stolen play, though conscious that punishment may await its indulgence. No, those fond looks could not cover deceit; the deep and soothing tones of that clear and musical voice could not express falsehood; and she would not, she could not, continue to doubt him.

"You know not, dearest Louisa, the pain and anxiety I endured when I left you, ill and suffering, last night," said Strathern, in a whisper. "I thought, too—but it must have been fancy—that you were less kind, less like yourself, than I had ever seen you since

you promised to be mine. It struck me that there was a sudden change in your manner to me at the ball, and this idea haunted me all night, and prevented me from closing my eyes. And yet I blamed myself, too, for this suspicion; for I know my Louisa is not capricious, and that, if I had unwittingly offended, she would instantly have told me so. Would you not, dearest?" and he took her hand, and pressed it to his lips.

"I was fatigued, ill, and out of spirits," replied Miss Sydney, evasively.

"Then, if I should again have the misfortune—and I count it a serious one—of seeing you unwell before I have the blessed privilege of watching by your pillow, promise me that you will not let me depart without returning the pressure of my hand, and uttering a few words of kindness and consolation. Promise me this, dearest."

"I promise," answered Louisa, blushing, and faintly smiling. And Strathern was satisfied.

"Of all amusements, a masquerade has always struck me as being one of the least agreeable," observed Mrs. Sydney, who now approached her daughter and her lover, having given them time to explain away any little quarrel that she fancied might have arisen between them on the previous night.

"I quite agree with you," replied Strathern, "and have ever entertained that opinion."

"Then you have been a frequenter of masquerades," said Miss Sydney, her jealous suspicions revived.

"I have occasionally attended them, but can hardly be said to have been a frequenter of such scenes."

"I understand that masque balls are entirely left off in good society in England," observed Louisa, and there was something so peculiar in her manner in making the observation that Strathern looked at her, and noticed that she seemed displeased.

"*Bals costumés* are sometimes given in London," resumed he, "and I erroneously included masquerades under that head. I never was present at a public masquerade, and should have almost as great a dread of entering among such persons as are, I believe, usually to be found in similar places, as a lady would have."

Louisa's spirits revived, and her fair face resumed its usual sweet and gentle expression, as she listened to this proof of the decorum and reserve of her lover, so unlike what might be expected from a libertine, as he had been reported to her to be.

"The lady who personated Mary Queen of Scots last night did not appear to be of our opinion with regard to masquerades," observed Mrs. Sydney.

"What a person she was!" said Strathern. "I really never beheld anything so absurd, or heard such an accent and style of expression. I wonder who the lord she referred to could be? I heard her say to her

companion that she expected one. I cannot congratulate him, whoever he may be, on such an acquaintance."

"I pitied the unfortunate woman who was with her, very much," observed Mrs. Sydney; "for she seemed to feel the peculiar awkwardness of her position exceedingly; but the Queen of Diamonds, as she might be called, rather than the Queen of Scots, appeared to be gifted with an imperturbable assurance."

"Was there ever so absurd an exhibition as Fitzwarren and his future countess made?" remarked Strathern; "and the most amusing part of it was that neither of them seemed in the least aware how supremely ridiculous they made themselves."

"But don't you think that Lady Sophia and Mr. Webworth were quite as absurd?" said Mrs. Sydney. "How ludicrous it was when the black was transferred from the dusky arm of Othello to the fair one of the gentle Desdemona, as well as to her white drapery —a little incident which so irritated the gentle lady of the Moor, that I began to think Othello had more to fear from her violence than she had to dread from his, so bitter were the reproofs I heard her bestow on him."

Thus did Mrs. Sydney and Strathern trifle, in the hope of drawing a smile to the beautiful lips of Louisa, but she relaxed not from the gravity into which she had fallen; and as her mother and lover

observed how unavailing were their efforts to amuse her, they too became grave and abstracted. Never had hours previously appeared so long to Strathern in the society of her he loved. He felt that there must be something more than a mere slight indisposition to occasion the painful change so evident in the appearance and manner of Louisa; and, as his belief in her illness faded away, a dread of her being actuated by caprice or ill-humour replaced it. But was it possible that she, whom he had hitherto regarded as faultless, if ever mortal might so be deemed, could thus descend from the pedestal where he almost deified her, to become a mere fallible woman, and thus to trifle with his feelings? Some portion of her own coldness might now be perceptible in him, as, with a more stately air than he had ever previously assumed, he arose to take his leave. Yet still he could not leave the room without one more effort to discover the cause of Miss Sydney's changed manner, and he approached close to the easy chair in which she sat reclined, and whispered, "Louisa, it is in vain you assert that nothing more than fatigue and a slight indisposition has produced the alteration I have witnessed with such chagrin. You have inflicted deep pain on me, and yet refuse to tell me why you are so cold. I have not merited this cruelty on your part, and, even now, though conscious of not having given the least cause of offence to justify the change I find,

I once more entreat of you, by the passionate love we have pledged to each other, and by our hopes of happiness, do not let me leave you wounded and grieved as I am."

The earnestness with which he spoke, the gravity of his aspect, and a tremulousness in his voice, greatly affected Louisa. She raised her eyes to his face, and, as they looked into his, the expression of deep tenderness that beamed in them told her, better than words could have done, how fondly she was beloved. She gave him her hand, and whispered an assurance that all was now well, that he was never dearer to her than at that moment, and that what he deemed coldness was, indeed, but the effect of slight indisposition occasioned by fatigue.

Her revived tenderness pleased, but did not quite satisfy him. He felt she was disingenuous, or, if not so, at least liable to the charge of capriciousness; and though he pressed the beautiful little hand confided to him, and sealed the peace thus made with a kiss on it, he was conscious even while doing so of a diminution of that enthusiastic admiration hitherto entertained for the object of his affection, and based on his confidence in her perfect freedom from the faults of temper, and the caprice imputed to so many of the young and lovely of her sex. Illness could not, or at least should not, produce coldness and reserve in one who must have seen the anxiety and

alarm her indisposition had excited in his breast. She had sent him from her, the previous night, filled with chagrin and dread for her safety, to pass a nearly sleepless night; and had allowed him this day to remain for hours by her without repaying him, until the last moment, by one glance of tenderness, by one word of love, for the anxiety he had undergone for the last twelve hours! And this was the idol he had all but worshipped, the creature on whom he was to depend for happiness through life! How insecure would his felicity be, if she was subject to such changes as the one he had witnessed, and without his being able to assign, or even imagine, the slightest cause for it! He left Mrs. Sydney's, his mind filled with these painful reflections, and his countenance revealed to Louisa that he went away dissatisfied.

CHAPTER XX.

The man with selfishness imbued
Will every generous thought exclude,
And stoop to actions base and mean,
Wherever good to self is seen.
Careless, he deals to others wrong,
And pain and sorrow will prolong
To those who, guiltless e'en in thought,
To injure him have never sought;
Till retribution, soon or late,
O'ertakes him with contempt and hate.

"Well, I declare, I never knew anything so strange and unaccountable in all my days as Lord Alexander's not keeping his appointment with me at the ball!" said Mrs. Maclaurin to her *dame de compagnie*, as they drove home to her hotel from the Palazzo de Belmonté.

Mrs. Bernard made no reply, being wholly at a loss what to say.

"Why don't you speak, instead of sitting there like

a stock or a stone?" resumed Mrs. Maclaurin, angrily. "Don't you think it strange?"

"Yes, ma'am, it certainly does seem so; but perhaps his lordship had some other engagement, from which he could not get free."

"I should like to know what other engagement could be of half such importance to him as one with me, and so I'll tell him to-morrow, I can assure you, when I see him, for I have no notion of putting up with such behaviour, even though *he* is a lord, and I know the harystocracy think themselves privileged to do just what they please to those who have not titles."

"I don't think, madam, that any nobleman or gentleman would presume to treat a lady with disrespect," observed Mrs. Bernard, seeing that she was expected to reply, and not knowing what would be the answer least likely to offend.

"But *I* think that there *are* noblemen and gentlemen who would and who do presume to treat ladies with disrespect. Isn't Lord Alexander Bouloo's conduct this evening a plain proof?"

Luckily for the alarmed Mrs. Bernard, the carriage at this moment stopped at Mrs. Maclaurin's hotel, and spared her the severe reproof which that lady was ready to utter, it being her invariable custom, when anything went wrong, not only to elicit the opinion of her companion, but absolutely to compel the timid and nervous

woman to give it, and then to quarrel with that opinion, however cautiously worded.

"Inquire of the porter whether Lord Alexander is yet come home?" said Mrs. Maclaurin.

"Don't you think, madam, that my doing so would have a strange appearance?"

"Fiddlesticks!—stuff and nonsense!—who cares? Ask immediately."

The porter, being questioned, reported that his lordship had returned early in the evening to dress, but was taken so unwell, that he was forced to go to bed and send for a doctor.

"O, my! did I ever hear of anything so sudden! I told you that his lordship must be ill, dangerously ill, to break his engagement with me," observed Mrs. Maclaurin, turning angrily to her *dame de compagnie;* "but you, like a stupid, ill-natured creature as you are, was more inclined to misjudge than to excuse him. You never had the sense or humanity to guess that he might be unwell. But it's just like you—quite of a piece."

This last unjust attack was more than Mrs. Bernard could bear; it was the drop that made her cup of sorrow overflow, and tears chased each other down her pale cheeks.

"What, crying? 'Pon my word, *you are* too provoking, and really wear out my patience. You can't bear being spoken to without beginning to blubber directly. Ring the bell, and order some supper and

wine for me, that I may try and recover the fatigue I have gone through ; and let me have no more tears, for they only put me in a passion."

When Mrs. Maclaurin had partaken, with an appetite that by no means denoted any anxiety or chagrin for the illness of her admirer, of the copious supper served to her, and had drank more wine than ladies are generally in the habit of taking, she retired to her chamber, where Justine, her *femme de chambre*, was waiting to undress her.

"Oh, Justin !" said she, "I have passed such a disagreeable evening. I never will go to a masked ball again as the Queen of Scots as long as I live, for I was bothered to death with people asking me all manner of questions about people I never heard of before, and which I could not answer ; and now I come home and find that poor, dear Lord Alexander Bouloo has been taken dangerously ill."

"Ah ! madame, it is vere true. I did hear of it from von of de *garçons* of de hotel. It is von great pity, for milor is a *charmant garçon*."

"Why, how is this, Justin ? It was only the other day that you couldn't find a word to say in his lordship's favour."

"I not know milor so vell den, madame. I see him more often since, ven you send for me to come to de *salon* ven he vas dere. I never saw such a handsome gentleman, so *comme il faut*, so *distingué ;* and his *valet*

de chambre, a person *très bien elevé*, who has come to offer his arm to me for de promenade, has told me that milor is a perfect angel, so *aimable*, so generous, so good, and kind. He did say to me, *en confiance*, dat all de grand ladies are in lofe vid his master, and do vant to marry him; but milor is so difficult to be pleased, he not take any of dem."

Mrs. Maclaurin listened with delight to Justine, who, having that day been put in possession of the bond from Lord Alexander, was determined warmly to espouse his interests, in order that he might the more speedily be in a state to pay it. She had sought an interview with Lord Alexander as soon as her mistress had left the hotel for the *bal costumé*, and had got him to affix his signature to the bond, which was witnessed by two friends of hers invited especially for the purpose. Lord Alexander had seized the occasion of presenting her with the most valuable ring in his possession, the gift of a dowager duchess in England, to whom his flattery and attentions had been successfully directed, until, when on the point of reaping their reward, she, unluckily for him, discovered that her jointure, though a large one, would be inadequate to discharge his debts, and so broke off the intended marriage. This gift conciliated the good-will of Justine, who quickly observing how little disposed Lord Alexander was to meet or escort her mistress at the ball, suggested the plea of illness as an excuse for his

absenting himself, and advised a bribe to the porter to secure his services in reporting the illness of his lordship when Mrs. Maclaurin should return to the hotel. Justine observed with pleasure that she could not have chosen a surer means of rendering herself agreeable to her mistress than by lavishing her commendations on her suitor; and so skilfully did she point out his many perfections, and, above all, quote the sayings of his valet respecting the alteration lately so visible in his master, that Mrs. Maclaurin's complacency was restored, and she became all smiles.

"And so his servant thinks that his lordship is at last in love, Justin?"

"Yes, madame, oh! terrible in lofe. He says milor vill sit for hours looking up at de *plafond*—de vat you call ceiling, and den he sighs and sighs just like a broken bellows ven it is blown; and he cannot eat any ting, and he does not sleep."

"Poor man! Really, Justin, I am quite sorry, 'pon my word I am. And now that you tell me, I remember I was struck by the badness of his appetite, for he has always done his dinner before I have half got through mine, and he never eats a morsel of Sally Lunn, muffin, or crumpet at tea, which is unsociable, as I have to eat by myself, Mrs. Bernard also always refusing to eat at tea."

"Ah! madame is *trop bonne*, too *aimable*, for dat voman. She is bad-tempered *creature*—does not lofe

madame—*une ingrate*, and does not like milor because she see he lofes madame so much."

"But how do you know this, Justin?"

"Know, madame! I see it vid my too leetle eyes. I look in her face, and I see all dat is in her heart."

"But really, Justin, I can't say *I* think her ill-tempered, for when I scold her, and I do so very often for nothing at all, when I am vexed about something else, she never shows bad humour."

"But doesn't she cry, madame? Ah! and de big tears do run down her face, and dat is all because she be so vex, so angry, and dare not show it to madame."

"Well, she shan't remain long with me, I can tell her."

"I hope not, madame, and ven a lady have got von lofing husband he is de best companion, and she not vant a *dame de compagnie*."

"I trust Lord Alexander Bouloo's illness will not be of a serious nature, or last long."

"Ah! dat vill depend on madame."

"How, Justin, on me? I am not a doctor to cure him."

"But madame can cure him better dan all de doctors, for as she made him ill by putting de lofe into his heart, he will not be vell till madame put his poor heart out of pain, and marry him."

"Don't you think that it would be too soon, Justin? I have not known him long enough yet."

"And if poor milor should die of lofe, vich I tink he vill, den madame vill never know him no better."

"But he never told me he was so desperately in love as all this comes to, Justin."

"De true lofe, madame, nevere is told moche, and especially de lofe of milors, for dey be *fier*, have de pride, and not like to have de pity, ven de lofe is vat dey do vant. I only hope you vill not be de cause dat milor vill die, for dat vould be terrible, and it vill happen if madame vill not vere soon marry him, and be miladi. How vell dat sound! How better dan Misteress Maclaurin! Vat ugly name! — Miladi Alexander Beaulieu, vat grand sound! Ah! madame vill be happy voman to have a handsome husband and so *élégant*, so *distingué*, to give her de arm and go vid her every where."

"Heigh-ho, Justin! There is a great deal of truth in what you say; but, after all, it is such a pleasant thing to have one's liberty—to have no one to consult about any thing—to go *where* one likes and *when* one likes—and to have no one to interfere with one's money but one's self."

"Ah! bah! madame; vat is dat compared to have such a handsome and noble husband; and to be a miladi, vid de power to vear a coronet of diamonds on

your head, and not to be called Misteress Maclaurin—*fi, donc*, vat ugly name!"

"Well, Justin, I suppose I *must* make up my mind to marry soon. Heigh-ho! I'll be mighty glad when it's all over."

Mrs. Maclaurin had by this time entered her bed, the progress of her undressing having been intentionally protracted by her wily *femme de chambre*, in order that she might induce her to abridge the courtship of her suitor, and let the marriage ceremony take place with as little delay as possible—a measure which she felt persuaded would be most agreeable to Lord Alexander Beaulieu, whose interest she, in consideration of the bond, had now fully espoused.

"You may take that satin dress I wore yesterday, Justin, with the black lace on it. It's a lovely dress, and cost me a fortune; but I don't think it suits my complexion. Now you may light the night-lamp, and put it behind the screen. That will do, Justin; call me at eleven o'clock. Good night."

"*Mon Dieu! quelle bête, quelle bête!*" said Justine to herself, as she left the chamber of her mistress, turning up her eyes as if to invoke the stars to witness the truth of her exclamation. "*Pauvre homme! pauvre mais méprisable homme!*" and so saying, with an expressive shrug of the shoulders and a toss of the head, she sought her pillow, to dream of the gold she was to receive when the ill-assorted

nuptials of her mistress and Lord Alexander Beaulieu should take place.

The desire for vengeance which had ever since his rejection rankled in the heart of Lord Alexander Beaulieu against Miss Sydney and her mother only wanted an occasion to be carried into effect, and this occasion he thought he had now found in the *bal masqué* to be given at the Palazzo. He therefore determined to disguise himself as a conjurer, and watch an opportunity of distilling into the ear of the lovely girl, unobserved by her lover, the calumny supplied by his fertile invention. Through the medium of his servant, an adept in intrigue and mischief, he had acquired an accurate description of the dresses to be worn by Mrs. and Miss Sydney, so that he was able to recognise them easily in the crowd, and his own disguise was so complete that he felt perfectly safe from detection. He put something in his mouth that his accent should not betray him, and, thus armed for mischief, he sought the fair and guileless object on whom his malice was to be wreaked.

Nor was he long in discovering her. Her graceful and exquisitely-shaped form might easily be distin-tinguished among the crowd of less beautiful ones that floated by, and never had its rare perfection struck him more forcibly than at that time, when her lovely face being concealed by the black mask which

shrouded it, the attention was not drawn off to the visage, but became fixed by the snowy throat and delicately-moulded bust, the finely-turned shoulders, and slender waist, and the dignified movements which might have revealed her to eyes even less interested in the discovery than those of Lord Alexander Beaulieu. Yet the charms on which he gazed produced no softening effect on his hardened feelings. On the contrary, they irritated, they maddened him. When he looked from this lovely creature, on whom all eyes were fixed, and to whom all gazers accorded the meed of admiration, to the vulgar and ridiculous figure of the coarse woman he meant to wed, his anger knew no bounds, and he breathed nothing but vengeance against her who had rejected him. When he heard the sarcasms and ridicule Mrs. Maclaurin's dress and appearance excited—she, from the profusion of her jewels, being a most conspicuous object—he became still more incensed. He was almost tempted to whisper some disagreeable truths in her ear, truths that might possibly, if uttered, produce the salutary effect of precluding her ever after from exhibiting herself in such gorgeous attire, but his jealousy of Strathern, and desire of inflicting pain on Miss Sydney, turned all his thoughts on this one point. He long hovered near her, watching an opportunity to address her, but so wholly was Strathern occupied with her, that he dared not speak.

At length, while a group of masks surrounded them, and his rival was replying to their *plaisanteries*, Lord Alexander glided close to Miss Sydney, and, unperceived, poured into her ear the well-woven tissue of calumnies he had invented for the occasion. He marked with fiend-like delight the sudden start and involuntary shudder of the fair girl, as she listened to his monstrous falsehoods, and, well divining that the dread of producing a quarrel would operate to prevent her revealing to her lover what had just been told her, he hovered near to gloat his eyes on the chagrin he had occasioned, the symptoms of which but too soon manifested themselves, in the silence and abstraction of the lovely Louisa for the rest of the evening.

"My plot works well," thought this base man, "and will, I hope, be the cause of an irreparable breach between this haughty girl and her proud suitor. I have sown the seeds of mischief in a fertile soil, for where suspicion and pride dwell, *there* will angry feelings find an easy entrance, and peace will be difficult to be restored, notwithstanding all their love for each other. I have studied her profoundly, and know her better than Strathern does, with all the opportunities he has had for becoming acquainted with her failings. He, poor dolt, sees only the beauty that has enslaved, and the talents that have captivated him; but I marked the pride, the ungovernable pride.

which is a leading characteristic in her nature, and the suspicion, which, whether an acquired or natural defect, lies dormant in her mind, like gunpowder, awaiting only the spark to ignite it into a flame. Of all men, Strathern is the last to submit to the insult of being suspected, because, conscious of not meriting it, his pride would quickly take alarm and resent it, even at the expense of his affection. Yes, I have laid a train that I trust will lead to a grand explosion, and thus have I avenged the insolence of the spoiled heiress. I only wish I could have my revenge on her mother, but she is so cold, so passionless, that I know not where to assail her. But have I not already found the only vulnerable part? Is not her happiness —nay, her very life—bound up in that of her daughter, and in wounding, probably destroying, her repose, have I not inflicted the deepest wound on her mother's? My heart feels lighter now that I have half accomplished the vengeance I have so long panted for, and I will away to my hotel, certain of sleeping better for it."

Lord Alexander Beaulieu was too wily not to have thought of all the precautions necessary to be taken to prevent the possibility of his being identified with the conjurer. He had procured two tickets for the *bal costumé*, and had given one to a casual acquaintance of humble fortune, on condition that he should not make use of it until a certain hour, and that he was to attend in the dress of a conjurer, precisely similar to

his own, which dress he provided. Another condition was annexed, which was, that he was not to unmask for the night. This person was of a similar height, and somewhat resembled him in his air; and, punctual to his engagement, as Lord Alexander Beaulieu left the Palazzo, his *double* entered it, and amused himself in wandering through the rooms, and addressing the usual predictions of good and evil to those around him. Often had the eye of the dejected and pained Louisa Sydney turned on the conjurer during the remainder of the evening, little imagining that it was no longer he whose whisper had so disturbed her tranquillity that she looked on, while her persecutor, satisfied with the mischief he had made, and glorying in the thought of the pain he had inflicted, betook himself to his hotel, and, feigning indisposition, sent for an English medical practitioner established at Rome, whose propensity to gossiping was so well known, that those who consulted him were sure to have the fact of their having done so quickly circulated all round the Eternal City, and more especially if they wished their illness to be kept a secret.

"God bless me, my lord, how long have you been ailing?" said Doctor Gillingsworth, as he entered, out of breath from the rapidity with which he ascended the stairs.

"I felt unwell in the morning, but was so anxious

to accompany some friends to the *bal costumé* at the Palazzo Belmonté to-night, that I would not send for you, fearing you might prohibit my going there."

"Very wrong, my lord, very wrong indeed! Your lordship should have instantly had medical advice. You know the old saying, 'a stitch in time saves nine.' A very sensible though an old adage, my lord. But I beg pardon, pray, proceed—your lordship was stating that you postponed calling in a physician."

"Yes, I hoped I should get better, but by the hour it was time to dress for the ball, by Jove, I felt so very ill that I was obliged to go to bed!"

"You should have sent for me then—*indeed* you should. An hour, nay, half an hour, is often very important in cases of illness, but 'better late than never,' as the old proverb has it. Let me feel your pulse," and the doctor drew forth a gold watch of unusual dimensions, to which a large gold chain and seals were attached, and seizing the wrist of his patient with one hand, while with the other he held up his watch to his eyes, and looking with suitable gravity, he counted the pulsations of the said wrist. "Pulse quick, very quick—feverish action. Let me see your lordship's tongue."

Lord Alexander Beaulieu was disposed to laugh as he exhibited it.

"Bad tongue, my lord, very red. Certain symptom of inflammatory action going on. Have you experienced much thirst?"

"Considerable," and the pretended *malade* was again tempted to smile as he remembered that the thirst to which he alluded was habitual to him after dinner, when any remarkably good wine tempted him.

"Ay, I thought so; quick pulse and thirst generally go together. Any pain?"

"Yes, in my head, attended with a certain swimming and giddiness."

"Yes, my lord, all that your lordship tells me confirms my first impression, that your lordship has caught the fever at present so prevalent at Rome. But do not be alarmed, my lord. I have been very successful in my treatment of it—have had great experience, and I doubt not in a short time—a few weeks, or, perhaps, even before—that I shall be able to restore your lordship to your usual state of health."

Lord Alexander Beaulieu, who never felt better in his life, was amused by the gravity with which Dr. Gillingsworth pronounced him to be in a fever, and enjoyed the comic scene, in which he was enacting a *rôle*.

"I should like very much to have a few ounces of blood taken from your lordship. I find depletion in such cases greatly facilitates the cure."

"You must excuse me, doctor, but I have a peculiar objection to being bled."

"In that case, my lord, I would not, on any account, insist on such a measure. I will, instead, administer a few draughts—one to be taken every hour until you feel relieved. Shall I write the prescription here, my lord, or call myself at the pharmacian's to order it to be made up?"

"I will not give you so much trouble. My servant will send the prescription to the apothecary's."

Doctor Gillingsworth sat down, wrote the prescription, and approaching the bed, held out his hand in a manner peculiar to some of his profession, but whether for the purpose of shaking hands with his patient, or of averting any exertion on his part, we cannot take upon ourselves to declare. All we know is, that when Lord Alexander Beaulieu, who was prepared for the occasion, slipped a golden coin into his hand, it closed spasmodically, and a bland smile stole over his face.

"You will, perhaps, be so good as not to mention my illness, doctor? It may be, it is a weakness, but I don't like to have it known that I am confined to my room."

"You may trust me, my lord. I am secret as the grave. I always remember the old adage, 'Least said is soonest mended.' Not a syllable shall transpire.

To-morrow, I shall be with you by ten o'clock. Hope to find you better. Would come sooner, but have so many visits to make. Can hardly get through half my calls in a day. No one here in my profession who can be trusted. Overworked, my lord, but cannot be helped. Good night; mind you are particular in taking a draught every hour. I am your lordship's most obedient."

"What a humbug!" was the first phrase that escaped the lips of Lord Alexander Beaulieu, as he sat up in his bed, and indulged in a hearty laugh, after the departure of Doctor Gillingsworth. "My pulse," resumed he, "is as regular as it is possible to be, and yet he pronounced me to be in a fever. Mind, Durnford, that you throw the draughts out of the window when they come, but in the meanwhile send off the prescription to the next apothecary's, and let the porter know how very ill I am."

"Yes, my lord."

"This is a *coup de maître*," said Lord Alexander to himself, as he lay thinking over the scene that had just taken place. "This gossiping quack will not fail to let all Rome know to-morrow that I am dangerously ill. My prohibition will only serve to excite him to giving my malady greater publicity. This will effect a double object. First, it will remove all suspicion, should any enter the mind of Miss Sydney, that I could be the person who, in the guise of a con-

jurer, had addressed her; and, secondly, it will excuse my breach of promise to my abominable Dulcinea, the widow, in not having joined her at the ball as I promised. Oh, ye Gods, what a creature she is! and what an exhibition she made of herself this night! I could have beaten her with pleasure as I listened to the *bêtises* she uttered, and looked at the absurd figure she made of herself. Never did the stupid dog who has been prescribing for me order so bitter a pill to be gulped down as this matrimonial one! To what terrible straits does poverty compel a man! I must not think of it, or, by Jove! I shall have, in reality, the fever Gillingsworth erroneously believes me to have. Durnford, give me that novel, and now you may go; I'll read myself to sleep."

In a quarter of an hour after, whether from the somniferous qualities of the novel, in the contents of which a false and cynical philosophy vied with grossness and immorality — a style of reading in which Lord Alexander Beaulieu peculiarly delighted — he fell as fast asleep as if his conscience could not reproach him with a single crime, or that he had not that very night sent to a sleepless pillow a young and innocent being who had never injured him in aught. But conscience had long ceased to exercise any influence over Lord Alexander Beaulieu—nay, even her reproaches were no longer heard. He lived but for the gratification of his own selfish pleasures, and he

would not have hesitated to compromise the happiness of all with whom he came in contact to secure the means of furnishing the enjoyments for which he thirsted. Nor let my readers suppose that this is an unnatural character. There are persons innumerable to be met in society with similar defects, the result of an early initiation into the artificial and corrupting world, the governing power of which is an inordinate and all-engrossing selfishness, to which feeling, rectitude, and honour, are but too often sacrificed or made subordinate.

When Lord Alexander Beaulieu awoke the next morning, the first sensation he experienced was a pleasurable one, as he recollected the poison he had instilled into the ear of Miss Sydney the previous night. He pictured her to himself pale and harassed, after a sleepless night, a prey to doubt and fear, combated by affection that would fain put to flight such new and unbidden guests from her gentle breast. "I have assailed her in her most vulnerable part," thought he, as he gloated on the picture of her misery which his fancy had formed, "and well do I know how, in spite of her attachment to Strathern, she will torture her heart, by conjuring up a thousand 'trifles, light as air,' to confirm the suspicion I have awakened. She is, if I have judged her rightly, too proud, too sensitive, to confide the cause of her chagrin to her lover, or even to her mother—and here is my stronghold on

her—for such a confidence would inevitably lead to an explanation that would destroy all my scheme of vengeance. Truth is potent when it speaks to ears willing to receive it, and the assurances of his innocence would not be made in vain by Strathern, or asserted by Mrs. Sydney. There is an open frankness in the mother that would make her at once repel with indignation any charge anonymously made against a friend; and she would, with all the intuitive quickness peculiar to her, divine the motive of the revelation made to her daughter, and probably guess at the person who had made it. This would be disagreeable, although I have, dreading the possibility of such an event, taken the precaution of having Doctor Gillingsworth ready to prove an *alibi*. Well, it is some consolation to a spirit like mine that if I cannot possess this lovely girl myself, I can prevent her bestowing her hand on another."

These reflections were interrupted by a visit from Doctor Gillingsworth, who, on tiptoes, entered the chamber.

"Better, I hope, my lord? Had a little sleep, I trust?"

"Much better, doctor."

"Was sure you would be. My mode of treatment seldom fails. Felt relieved soon after you took your medicine, I venture to say. Let me feel your pulse. Much less quick—fever nearly subdued—greatly im-

proved. Must keep quiet, nevertheless, for a few days, lest you might have a return of the fever. Relapses are always to be dreaded. I must keep you on the starving system for a little while; barley-water, with a little sugarcandy in it, but no lemon-peel — mind, no lemon-peel. I'll just write a prescription;" and the sapient doctor sat down, and indited sundry lines in Latin resembling hieroglyphics. "Your lordship will take one of the draughts I have ordered every four hours, and this evening I will look in on you again."

Doctor Gillingsworth approached so near the bed with the prescription in his hand that Lord Alexander Beaulieu might have glided his fee into it had he been prepared with it; but Durnford, observing the manœuvre of the M.D., quickly seized the requisite sum from a table, which he slipped into the palm of his master, who transferred it into that of his physician.

"Now that I see your countenance more distinctly, my lord, I am not quite so satisfied as I was. There is a heaviness about the eyes that proves all is not yet right. I have a great deal to do to-day, a very great deal — so many patients ill, and many of them living at such a distance; nevertheless, I will come to you again at half-past three o'clock to see the effect of these draughts. Yes, I will then be quite sure that you are going on well;" and, bowing lowly to his

patient, Dr. Gillingsworth departed, leaving Lord Alexander to indulge in a fit of laughter at his medical skill.

"Order me some dry toast and chocolate, Durnford, for I'm as hungry as a hunter; and answer all inquiries about my health by saying that my doctor finds me a little better this morning."

CHAPTER XXI.

Time was when Cupid mortals sway'd,
And tender hearts his laws obeyed,
Blithely he led each willing pair
To Hymen's altar, but compare
Our modern days, when Plutus rules
Mankind, the sole exception—fools.

There are few positions more humiliating and mortifying to a woman than that of finding her affianced husband become every day more cold and indifferent towards her, and less disposed to seek her society. A high-spirited woman, possessed of even the least delicacy, would quickly release her betrothed from his engagement the moment she had made such a discovery. But Lady Olivia Wellerby was not a person at all likely to take this step; for, though fully aware of the indifference of Lord Fitzwarren, an indifference which he had too little tact to conceal, and hating him for it, she was by no means disposed to resign her right over him, and consequently affected not to

perceive that which was obvious to all, but which she had sense enough to be convinced no remonstrance of hers could remedy. Husbands with rank and fortune she knew were most difficult to be caught, for she had too long and unsuccessfully tried her talent in ensnaring, not to have gained a vast deal of experience on this point. To bring a man to a downright proposal of marriage was, she felt, so arduous a task, that she was little disposed to try her chance again, and, therefore, pertinaciously adhered to an engagement, the fulfilment of which, it was but too plain, was looked forward to with perfect indifference by her future husband. But, though fully conscious of her exact position with Lord Fitzwarren, it was gall and wormwood to her to see that others also were aware of it. Her vanity, and she had an inordinate share of it—perhaps because her craving desire for its gratification had never been indulged—writhed under the daily, hourly observations and taunts of Lady Sophia, who, with a most unsisterly ill-nature, aggravated the annoyance she felt, and avenged her own mortification at the superior good fortune of Lady Olivia in having at length secured a husband. Never were they alone that Lady Sophia did not renew her bitter remarks on the apparent indifference of her sister's betrothed, and declare that were she so treated she would spurn him.

"I have heard of husbands growing cold and neg-

lectful soon *after* marriage," said Lady Sophia, the day after the *bal costumé*, "but it was reserved for Lord Fitzwarren to show that he was tired of his *fiancé*. One comfort you will have, and that is, he cannot become more indifferent when you are his wife than he is now. You really have wonderful patience, Olivia, and I admire, though I confess I could not imitate it."

"I wish you had an opportunity afforded you of trying," replied Lady Olivia; "but I fear, Sophy, you have no such good luck."

"Call you it good luck to marry a fool—and a fool, too, who cares not for you, and has not even the grace to keep up appearances?"

"I call it good luck to have secured a husband with high rank, old family, large estates, and tolerable good looks; and only wish I could congratulate you on a similar good fortune."

"Heaven forbid I should ever wed a man who was as indifferent towards me as Lord Fitzwarren is towards you! I would prefer any fate to that."

"Yet I *have* heard you say you cared not for love, provided you could obtain rank and fortune by marriage."

"I used to think so, before I saw the humiliating position in which you, Olivia, are placed; but, since then, I have entirely changed my opinion, and rather than be pointed at by the world as a mean-spirited

creature, who kept a man to his engagement when he no longer wished to fulfil it, I would remain single all my life."

"No, you would not, Sophy. I know you better, and am well aware that you would give any thing or every thing at this moment to be in my place; and bad as your temper is, you would stifle every ebullition of it rather than risk breaking with your betrothed."

"Me!"

"Yes, you. Don't think that you can deceive me, Sophy, by your declarations and taunts. I am aware of all that passes in your heart, and pity the feelings which prompt you to be so malicious."

"And I pity you, Olivia, who are compelled to conceal your anger at the neglect you experience at the hands of your future husband, lest the exhibition of it should furnish him with an excuse of breaking his engagement altogether."

"Reserve your pity for yourself, for you will need it when you find yourself condemned to solitude in the country with papa and mamma, a daily witness of their matrimonial squabbles, with no chance of seeing a single man fit to be looked at, while I shall be in the enjoyment of every advantage which the station of Lord Fitzwarren can command, part of which advantages you might have partaken by being my guest, had not your envy and jealousy induced you to annoy and wound me."

While this quarrel was taking place between the sisters, Lord and Lady Wellerby were engaged in one of those conjugal *tête-à-têtes* which neither ever sought unless compelled to do so by some hard necessity. Both had lost at cards the two last evenings, his lordship to the tune of some hundreds, at the rooms of some of his *soi-disant* friends, and her ladyship at the card-tables of hers. The tempers of husband and wife were consequently unusually irritable, and both, conscious of this, felt a secret dread of an explosion, which neither possessed sufficient self-control to prevent.

"You sent to say you wanted to speak to me," said Lord Wellerby, with portentous brow and a stern glance.

"Yes, my dear lord; I wished to explain to you why I am obliged, yes, positively compelled, to apply to you again for some money."

"And I must tell you that I cannot let you have any; and, what is more, madam, if I could I would not. You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Lady Wellerby, at your age, to be so thoughtless and improvident as to be everlastingly craving money from me!"

"At my age, Lord Wellerby! You really surprise me. You know that I am many years your junior. But I suppose this is the reason why you think I should be treated as a girl, and be compelled to ask for money,

instead of having a liberal supply at my disposal, as every other woman of my rank has."

"Your rank, indeed! And, pray, who gave you that rank, I should like to know?"

"My own birth and station — and, without vanity, I might add my personal attractions — entitled me to a much higher rank than yours, Lord Wellerby; and, had I not foolishly preferred you, I might have....."

"Remained an old maid all your life, as your sister did."

"Me remain an old maid! Really, my lord, you forget what is due to yourself and to me when you use such language."

"So you always say, Lady Wellerby, whenever you force me to tell you a little wholesome truth. But recrimination is useless, so we had better avoid it. You want money, and I am determined not to give you any. I have already advanced you more than half your next year's pin-money, and if anything should occur, I should be a loser."

"What should occur, Lord Wellerby? Am I likely to elope?"

"Not at all; and for the very best reason in the world —you could find no one to elope with you. Old women are safe in this respect."

"Old women! It is too absurd to hear you talk such nonsense, and I wonder you are not ashamed to utter it."

"Do you mean to deny that you are an old woman, Lady Wellerby?"

"No one but you, my lord, would ever assert that I was old; but your unkindness prompts you to say everything that is cruel;" and here the lady had recourse to her handkerchief to wipe away the tears of anger and mortification which were chasing each other down her flushed cheeks. Her lord was, however, too well accustomed to her tears to be at all moved by them, and, fully conscious of this, she was angry with herself for giving way to them.

"I have often warned you against card-playing," said Lord Wellerby, "and told you what the consequence would be. Women, with their weak heads, have no business to be risking their money. Whist is a game that requires *some* intellect, and I have never yet seen any one of your sex who had enough to play a steady rubber. With men it is different; most of us can play tolerably well, and some, like myself, really understand it scientifically."

"Then why do you lose so frequently? You think, because I do not speak on the subject, that I am ignorant how deeply you play, and how often you lose large sums, while you reproach me for losing comparatively small ones."

"I lose *my own* money, Lady Wellerby; but you lose *mine*, and this makes a considerable difference in the affair. I before told you that I have already ad-

vanced you above half your next year's pin-money, and if anything should happen it would be lost to me."

"But what *can* happen, Lord Wellerby?" said the lady, still sobbing, and applying her handkerchief to her eyes.

"Why, you may die. We are all mortal, you know."

"Good Heavens! can you be so barbarous as to calculate on my death? Was there ever anything so shocking!"

"A sensible man calculates on the chances of every event before he embarks his money on a venture."

"Then I'll tell you what, Lord Wellerby, you will be disappointed in your calculations, for I am determined to take more care of my health than ever, if only to defeat your hopes; and, as you are many years my senior, the chances are that I shall long outlive you."

"Don't be too sure of that, my lady. I'm a tough old fellow, I can tell you, and you begin to break very visibly. Every one remarks it, and people are always asking me what is your complaint."

"And do you suppose that no one speaks to *me* about *your* altered looks? Why, it was only last night that Lady Melcombe observed how infirm and old you had grown, and advised me to consult Doctor Gillingsworth for you."

"She'd be devilish glad to be half as well and hearty as I am! A poor, sickly, nervous old fool, who wants to force people to fancy themselves ill, in order to gain fees for her toadying doctor, who brings her all the gossip of Rome every morning."

"Heaven knows, Lord Wellerby, that your health has ever been to me a subject of the greatest, the tenderest interest!"

"I can readily believe it, and for a very good reason. You know that at my death my property goes out of the family, and that you will find yourself reduced to live on your jointure in a very different style to that in which you have lived with me. One of the advantages of our English customs is, that wives, in nine cases out of ten, lose so much instead of profiting by the deaths of their husbands, that, however they may dislike them, they are compelled to desire their longevity, rather than see themselves turned adrift from the homes where they have been accustomed to dwell in ease and comfort."

"I am a stranger to such unwomanly and selfish feelings and motives, Lord Wellerby."

"So every one of your sex would say."

"Hear me this once, my dear lord, and I promise you, on my word of honour, that I will not again ask you for any money for a year. Let me have a hundred pounds, and you will make me most grateful. I have

really the most urgent occasion for it, or I would not press you."

"I'll tell you what I'll do, Lady Wellerby, and it is merely to oblige you that I make the offer. I'll give you the hundred pounds, on condition that you give up your pin-money for a year to come."

"By which you will save one hundred and fifty pounds. Why, really a Jew would not make such hard conditions as this. Give up two hundred and fifty pounds to receive one down!"

"You have my ultimatum; accept or refuse it as you think best, but no other terms will I offer you," and Lord Wellerby motioned to leave the room.

His lady-wife passed in review all the difficulties of her actual position. Indebted to two or three of her female friends, to the amount of eighty-five pounds, she knew that if they were not paid, her reception henceforth in their society would be anything but agreeable. Nevertheless, to leave herself penniless for a year to come was a hard measure. While she reflected, Lord Wellerby took up his hat and cane, and walked to the door; but, ere he had passed its threshold, she called to him not to go, and with an ill grace consented to his conditions. A cheque on the banker at Rome for the hundred pounds was drawn and delivered to the lady, and her husband, again reminding her of their bargain, sallied forth to meet some of his

friends, and to play a few rubbers, after reading the English newspapers, according to his usual routine.

"Well, Livy, I'm off to-morrow," said Lord Fitzwarren to his betrothed, after the morning salutation on entering the *salon*. "By Jove, I can no longer stand Rome! I offered to frank Axy Beaulieu to Naples and Sicily, and—would you believe it?—he has refused. There must be something in the wind to make him, who is so fond of saving his money—and who, poor devil! has so little to spare—reject such an offer. You have, I suppose, heard that he has been very ill. That fellow Gillingsworth has been doctoring him some days."

"And so you really go to-morrow, dear George? Heighho! How sadly I shall miss you! But I cannot be so selfish as to wish you to stay at a place where you are bored."

"Which proves that you are a good-natured as well as a sensible girl, Livy. The time will pass quickly over, for I have remarked that, however dull and tiresome a place may be, time *does* pass, and this is something. I will be back from Sicily to meet you at Naples, where we are to take each other 'for better or worse.' The settlement will be sent out there by my solicitor, and that, signed and sealed, there need be no delay."

"You will write to me often, dear George, won't you?"

"I am the worst correspondent in the world, Livy. Why, would you believe it, that even to my stud-groom I can seldom bring myself to write?—and you know that for a man on the turf it is of the utmost importance that he should continually write his instructions to his stud-groom. No; I fear you will find me a devilish bad correspondent. Do you know, Livy, that I have been thinking of a very good plan to save you and me trouble when we are asunder. It is for my valet to marry your *femme de chambre*, and they can write to each other and mention all our whereabouts, and what we are doing, and so prevent the necessity of our writing. Don't you think it a capital scheme?"

"Excellent," replied Lady Olivia, affecting to smile, though her vanity was deeply wounded by this incontestable proof of her future husband's indifference.

"The fact is, I hate trouble in any shape, and writing *is* a positive trouble; but I will send you a few lines now and then, and Webworth, whom I take with me, can write a regular account of our movements if you wish it."

"Oh, yes, dear George! I should like it of all things. It will be such a consolation to me to know exactly where you are, and what you are doing."

"Why, to say the truth, Livy, I don't expect to be much amused in Sicily, where I hear there is little to see except a pack of ruins, and I have had quite

enough of them here. But anything is better than Rome."

"What an incorrigible brute!" thought Lady Olivia, but she took especial care not to give utterance to this thought, and smiled most graciously, an effort which cost her no slight exertion of self-command.

"I must bid the old folk good bye, and shake hands with Sophy."

"Shan't we see you in the evening, dear George!"

"I fear not, for I have engaged half-a-dozen fellows to dine with me, and we are going to have a regular smoking-match, and I won't be able to get away."

"They'll think it so strange, if you don't come in the evening to take leave, if only for half-an-hour."

"Who'll think it strange?"

"Papa and mamma and Sophia."

"Whew! and who the deuce cares what they think? Not I, for one. You and I understand each other, Livy, don't we? And this it is that reconciles me to matrimony. 'Livy is a devilish clever, sensible girl,' says I to myself, when I am alone, 'and as a man *must* marry one time or another, I may as well wed now as hereafter. She won't bother or trouble me, for I've let her see exactly what sort of a fellow I am, and if she likes to put up with my ways, why, that's her affair.' This is what I say to myself, whenever I think of our engagement, and this it is that makes me not regret it so much as I should otherwise do."

"Yes, dear George, you and I *do* understand each other, and I should be wretched at the mere thought of putting you out of your way."

"You are a good girl, Livy; and now, if you really wish to study my wishes in my absence, all you have to do is to read the Racing Calendar, and learn to know something about horses, and then we shall get on much better together, for we'll have always a subject to talk about. This is the reason I never get bored with men, for they can talk of what most interests me, which is so pleasant. Promise me, Livy, that you'll study the Racing Calendar. I have one which I brought out with me; indeed I never travel without one, and I will leave it with you."

"Thanks, dear George, how very kind of you! You may be assured I shall study it every day, and surprise you when we meet by my proficiency. I wish you had lent me the book before."

"We shall get on very well, Livy, when we get to England. *There* I am never bored, and you will be delighted with my horses. I'll take you down to Newmarket with me to the meetings. Several men of my acquaintance always take their wives there."

"I shall be delighted to go with you, and to see your stables and favourite horses."

"And what would you say to having a betting-book of your own, Livy, and staking some of your pin-money in backing my nags? I'll put you up to

all the secrets. I'm a knowing hand, I can tell you, and between us we may make lots of money."

"I'll be entirely directed by you, dear George, and hope I shan't make a stupid scholar. How I should have liked to have seen your poor Fanny! I often think what a perfect animal she must have been."

"She *was*, Livy, perfect, as you'll say when you see her picture, a capital likeness, for which I paid a hundred guineas. No, I never can like any thing as I liked Fanny, and never can hope to find her equal while I live. I have her portrait in my bed-room, at home, and never look at it without being made melancholy. But time flies, and I must be off. Suppose you go and see for the old folk, that I may wish them good-bye, and Sophy, too; I should like to shake hands with Sophy."

"Sophia has really been behaving so unkindly to me of late that I hardly can wish you to show much civility to her. She is always endeavouring to persuade me that you, dear George, don't love me, and..."

"Poor soul! don't mind that, Livy. It's all jealousy. Sophy is naturally enough desperately cut up, because I preferred you to her. She can't help it, poor girl, and therefore she shows her temper. Indeed, for the matter of that, there is not, I dare be sworn, a girl in all Rome that doesn't owe you a grudge, Livy, for catching me, and who would not, if she had an opportunity, try to torment you just as Sophy does.

'Tis their nature, poor things, and they can't help it. So you must not be angry with poor Sophy."

Lady Olivia was more struck by the egregious vanity than by the good-nature of her betrothed husband, and as she went in pursuit of her mother and sister she muttered to herself, "I deserve to be canonized as a saint for the patience with which I submit to this brute; but let me once be his wife, and I will answer for it that Lady Fitzwarren will amply avenge the slights offered to Lady Olivia Wellerby."

Lady Wellerby and Lady Sophia entered the *salon* —the first somewhat alarmed at the intelligence of the approaching departure of her future son-in-law, who she feared might escape from his engagement, and the second rather pleased than otherwise that Lord Fitzwarren was going, from the belief that it would be disagreeable to her sister.

"I am much surprised to hear that you are going to leave us, dear Lord Fitzwarren," said Lady Wellerby.

"When you know me better you will never be surprised at anything I do, for I am a strange fellow, and so sudden in my resolves that Livy must always hold herself in readiness for a move. And you, Sophy, are you, too, surprised that I am setting off?"

"Not in the least. Nothing that you can do will ever surprise me."

"I don't know whether you mean that as a compliment or not, Sophy; but I will take it as one, for

I hate to be taken for a tame, jog-trot sort of animal, that settles days beforehand what he intends to do, or where he means to go. The comfort of a good fortune is the power of setting off when and where the fancy takes one to go. I never made up my mind two days —no, by Jove! nor one day—beforehand what I meant to do. Why, the very day I proposed for Livy here I had no more notion of it than of flying, and if any one had told me I would, I'd have betted him five to three I would not."

Lady Sophia cast a glance at her sister as this foolish speech was uttered, and there was so much malice in the expression of her countenance, that Lady Olivia could have inflicted any punishment, however severe, on her future lord, for thus furnishing her sister with fresh weapons to wound her, being well aware that his avowal would often be quoted by her as proof of his perfect indifference.

"Olivia will greatly feel your absence," observed Lady Wellerby, "and therefore I could have wished you not to leave Rome."

"Livy is too sensible a girl to make a fool of herself because I go to amuse myself," replied the obtuse Lord Fitzwarren, "and the sooner she accustoms herself to my ways the better. I shall be in one place in one day, and at another the next. London, Newmarket, the Highlands of Scotland, Doncaster, and Heaven only knows where. I may, or may not, take

her with me, and she must let it depend wholly on my humour. If I take her, she must rough it, that's all. Be ready to start at a moment's warning, and travel all night. Never think of putting a bandbox, or other woman's gear, into my carrriage. Mind you, I never will insist on her going any where with me unless she likes it, for that wouldn't be fair, but if she *will* go, and I dare say she will always be wishing to do so, why, she must, as I before said, be ready at a moment's notice. You see, Lady Wellerby, I am free and above-board. I put out all my seams to be seen beforehand, and if they are found to be disagreeable to rub against, there's always time to cry off."

"No danger that Olivia will cry off, is there, sister?" said Lady Sophia, with a sneer. "But what woman would wish to break an engagement with you?"

"'Pon my soul, Sophy, you are a devilish clever and good-natured girl, after all," observed Lord Fitzwarren, unconscious that the Lady Sophia was mocking him, "and it won't be my fault if I don't get you a good husband when we go back to England. Well, good bye, my lady;" and he shook hands with his future mother-in-law. "Remember me to the old governor. Farewell, Sophy;" and he kissed the lady's cheek; "and God bless you, my dear Livy;" and he pressed his affianced wife to his breast.

"Come, no tears, Livy;" for she had put her handkerchief to her eyes. "We'll meet soon, at Naples.

Good-bye ;" and off darted Lord Fitzwarren, no more touched by his parting with the lady of his love, than if he had only bade farewell to any of his male acquaintances. He even hummed a tune as he descended the stairs, and never looked up at the window where Lady Olivia had sentimentally placed herself to watch his receding steps.

"You need not look after him, Olivia," said Lady Sophia. "Such a delicate attention is quite thrown away on one who seems rather to rejoice at than lament his separation from you."

"'Pon my word, Olivia, I am somewhat uneasy. He is such a very extraordinary sort of man ;" and Lady Wellerby looked alarmed.

"You are doubtless afraid he will pine and fret during his absence from Olivia," remarked her ill-natured sister.

"Leave off uttering such sarcasms, Sophia," said her mother. "Olivia, I dare say, knows what she is about, and if *she* is not uneasy, we have no right to be so. Lord Fitzwarren is, it must be confessed, a little original, but no one is perfect. He has many fine qualities, I dare say."

"Yet we have never hitherto discovered any one of them," remarked Lady Sophia.

"I beg leave to differ from you, Sophia. What could be more amiable than his proposing for your sister? How few young men of his rank and wealth

in the present day would have acted with such generosity! Never named a word about her having any fortune; and nobly, and without being solicited, declared his intention of settling a large jointure on her. If such conduct does not prove his possessing noble qualities, I know not what could."

"More especially, as you must be convinced, mamma, even by his own avowal, made here in our presence, that his proposing for Olivia was quite a chance, wholly unpremeditated an hour before."

"Nevertheless, Sophia," said Lady Olivia, with as much calmness of manner and dignity as she could assume, "I feel the most perfect confidence in Lord Fitzwarren; and, as I am satisfied, and know that he and I quite understand each other, I am in no way to be troubled by the ill-natured remarks which only prove how glad she who makes them would be to stand in my place. I assure you, mother, that you have not the remotest cause for uneasiness about the stability of purpose of Fitzwarren, who, though perhaps not so demonstrative in his mode of evincing his affection as other men might be, is no less sincere and well meaning."

"You delight me, dear Olivia, indeed you do. You are so rational—so very right."

And thus ended the conference.

CHAPTER XXII.

Oh, Love! whose smiling advent ever cheers,
Why art thou followed soon by doubts and fears?
Waking the heart to griefs before unknown,
'Till at thy mandate hope and peace have flown.
'Tis thine to cheat us with delusive art,
Blandly to soothe and captivate the heart;
And when it yields to thy despotic sway,
And reason's dictates can no more obey,
Letting wild passion rule the troubled breast,
Thou smil'st to see thy sov'reign pow'r confest.
Yet oh! without thee who could bear to live,
Since thou alone to life a charm can'st give!

When Mrs. Sydney found herself alone with her daughter, after the departure of Strathern, she thought it her duty to remonstrate with her on the visible change in her manner towards her betrothed husband.

"Take heed, my dearest Louisa," said the anxious mother, "how you trifle with your own happiness and

that of another. Your manner towards Mr. Strathern is so wholly changed, that I cannot think such an alteration could occur, unless you had great reason to be dissatisfied with him; for I would not willingly believe you to be capricious, and yet, so highly do I estimate him, that I should be almost as reluctant to think that he has done aught to merit this change."

Louisa paused, and for a moment, as on the preceding night, felt disposed to avow to her mother all that was passing in her mind; but, unhappily, a dread of appearing weak and credulous in the eyes of her parent, by confessing herself to be influenced against the chosen of her heart, by the whispers of an unknown slanderer, sealed her lips, and she endeavoured to avert her mother's comments by alleging that indisposition alone had produced the alteration noticed. Unwilling to increase her visible dejection, Mrs. Sydney forebore to urge the subject any further, but she experienced a deep pang at the consciousness of her child's want of confidence in her, in thus concealing whatever real or imaginary cause had operated to produce her coldness to Mr. Strathern.

There are few positions more trying to the heart of a fond and devoted mother than that of finding herself treated with want of confidence by a daughter, for whose happiness she would readily make any or every sacrifice. So delicate and refined were Mrs. Sydney's feelings that she was keenly alive to

this proof of what she deemed unkindness, and as she dwelt in thought on the boundless affection she had ever lavished on her daughter, she felt the truth of the lines of our divine bard—

> "Oh! how much sharper than a serpent's tooth
> It is to have a thankless child!"

To this daughter she had devoted every thought and every hope of her life since ruthless death had snatched from her the other dear objects who shared her affection. She had loved *them* in her sole surviving child, and as she traced resemblances to the beloved departed in her, it seemed as if all the tenderness once shared by them was now concentrated in this last tie that bound her to existence. No sacrifice was ever deemed to be such for this adored daughter. For her, during her childhood, had she isolated herself from friends and acquaintances, that she might, free from interruption, devote the whole of her time to this treasured object; for her had she resigned herself to the heavy trials with which it had pleased divine Providence to afflict her, and learned to indulge hope once more that her past griefs would be repaid by witnessing and contributing to the happiness of this beloved one. But now, when that happiness was within reach, she saw her child ready to dash down the fair fabric which *she* had beheld rise with such thankfulness and satisfaction, and though feeling as

deep an interest in the affair as Louisa Sydney herself, she was denied the knowledge of the cause of the change in her daughter's sentiments, and, consequently, could take no step to remove false impressions, or to soften true ones.

And was this disingenuousness and cold reserve what a fond mother had a right to expect from an only and almost idolized child? Mrs. Sydney felt that it was not, and tears of wounded and disappointed affection betrayed how keenly alive she was to the wrong. Had these tears been shed in the presence of Louisa, it is more than probable that the sight of them would have brought her to her mother's arms, there to confess all that was passing in her own heart, for what daughter could withstand a mother's tears, and more especially when conscious they were occasioned by anxiety for her happiness? Unfortunately for both, Mrs. Sydney had sought the privacy of her own chamber, there to weep over her disappointment, and Louisa remained in ignorance of the pain which her reserve had inflicted. Yet some compunctious feelings did arise in her breast when, in two hours after, she beheld the more than ordinary paleness of her mother's cheek, and the traces of tears in her eyes, and she inquired, with unaffected interest, whether she had not been unwell. This inquiry seemed almost like an insult, or, at least, indicated such a total want of sympathy with the

emotions that filled her heart, that it produced no other effect on Mrs. Sydney than an assertion that she was not ill. How often does an ill-timed reserve check the overflowings of affection, and prevent explanations which might lead to a restoration of confidence and happiness between persons dear to each other!

When Strathern returned to his apartment, he found some letters on his table, and listlessly breaking the seals, an anonymous one among the number met his eye. His first impulse was to throw it in the fire without perusal, but the name of Miss Sydney attracted his attention, and he read on. Had Louisa and he been on the same confidential and happy terms which had existed between them previously to the masked ball, he would not have condescended to peruse an anonymous letter, having, like all honourable-minded persons, an utter contempt for such productions and their writers; but the unaccountable change in her manner excited so much anxiety in his breast, that a vague notion of finding some clue to the discovery of it in this letter induced him to overcome his disgust to it, and to read on to the end. The contents were as follows, and in a disguised hand:—

"One who esteems you, and knows your good qualities, thinks it a pity that you should become the dupe of a cold-hearted and capricious coquette, who,

whatever you may suppose to the contrary, entertains no real sentiment of attachment towards you. So little capable is Miss Sydney of appreciating your character or of valuing your affection, that she, with the suspicion which forms so strong a characteristic in her nature, believes you actuated by mercenary motives in seeking her hand, nor can your large and unencumbered fortune preserve you from these unjust and insulting surmises in her mind. What happiness can a man with your frank disposition and generous feelings expect in a union with one so wholly opposed to you? Be warned ere it be too late, and take advantage of the first occasion furnished you by her capricious temper—and such will not be wanting—to break off an engagement, the fulfilment of which can only tend to make you wretched through life."

Strathern threw the letter from him with anger and disdain. That a creature like his Louisa should be accused of cold-heartedness and caprice appeared to him as the most signal act of injustice, and he pronounced that such a charge could only originate in envy or jealousy; and yet, while he thus reasoned, the recollection of her late unaccountable change of manner towards him occurred to his mind, and lent a sting to the accusations contained in the anonymous letter, which, without this consciousness on his part, they never could have possessed. He felt angry with

himself for remembering aught that served to give a colour to the charges in the epistle, yet could not chase the remembrance of her altered manner from his mind.

"Capricious she certainly must be," thought Strathern, as he mused over his last interview with Miss Sydney. "I had said or done nothing that could produce the slightest displeasure, and nevertheless there is no disguising the fact from myself that her conduct to-day evinced coldness and indifference, if not absolute dissatisfaction. Then she is accused of being suspicious. I should hate a suspicious woman." But the notion of hate coupled with Louisa Sydney was one that could not long find a place in his thoughts, and he repelled it with a "Psha!" and an angry shake of the head. Yet the notion of her being suspicious, once entered into his mind, could not so easily be dismissed, and again and again it presented itself to him. "There is no defect," thought he, "that I could not sooner pardon than a suspicious nature; it indicates such a want of generosity, such an absence of that confiding tenderness which forms the sweetest, as well as the surest and most indissoluble, bond of love. And to suspect *me* of mercenary motives!—*me*, who never yet harboured a sentiment that approached a mercenary feeling. It is insulting—it is monstrous; and if, *indeed*, Louisa Sydney can entertain such unworthy, such base doubts, she must

be far from deserving the fond, the deep attachment I have entertained for her. But, no—I will not, I *cannot* believe her capable of indulging such injurious thoughts of me. Have I not poured out every sentiment, every feeling of my heart to her, that heart which never loved before she awakened all its dormant tenderness? Have I concealed a single thought from her, or glossed over an error? And then to be so misunderstood, so misjudged, and suspected of being actuated by mercenary motives. Oh! it is too bad, too humiliating, and wounds me to the very soul."

Long did Strathern, the proud and sensitive Strathern, give way to bitter reflections like these—one moment casting from him all belief that the object of his affection *could* wrong him by suspicions, and the next relapsing into anger as the possibility of her doing so presented itself to him.

It is a strange but, nevertheless, a striking fact, frequently noticed by accurate observers of human nature, that persons are least disposed to pardon in others the faults peculiar to themselves. Whether this proceeds from ignorance of their own besetting sins, or from a profound knowledge and consequently a hatred of them, has never yet been satisfactorily ascertained; but however this may be, Strathern felt that he could have more readily looked over any defect in his betrothed wife than that of being suspicious, and yet this precise fault was perhaps the most prominent, if not

the sole one in his own character. Had *he* not entertained an inherent dread of being preferred not for himself, but for his fortune, and had not this very fear led him to rejoice that the circumstance of Miss Sydney being an heiress precluded all doubts on the subject? Yet *she* must not entertain similar feelings, without being laid open to the most severe censure, censure far exceeding the fault of which she stood accused—a fault which was, in all human probability, more to be attributed to the peculiarity of her position as an heiress than to her natural disposition. Never had Strathern passed two more disagreeable hours than while engaged in these painful reflections. The averted looks, abstracted air, and silence of Louisa Sydney during their last interview, were recalled to memory, and the writer of the anonymous letter—who, as probably our readers have already divined, was no other than Lord Alexander Beaulieu—would have rejoiced in the success of his malicious scheme for interrupting the good understanding of the lovers, could he have witnessed the gloom and unhappiness of both.

"To suspect me, who so adored and worshipped her!" would Strathern exclaim again and again, as he dwelt on the contents of the letter he had received; "would that I could tear her image from my heart! But no, there it reigns despotically, and even now,

while writhing under the sense of her injustice, I feel that I can never cease to love her. If I could but see and converse with her mother alone! Mrs. Sydney has always been most kind and indulgent to me, and would on this occasion reveal to me the cause of Louisa's changed manner. And has it, indeed, come to this? Am I, while conscious of having furnished no cause for offence, to sue for pardon, to humble myself before this imperious beauty, and to entreat her mother to tell me why she is so changed? Fool that I was, to abandon my whole soul, my every hope of happiness, to the keeping of one who could so wrong me as she has done! But I will conquer this unmanly weakness? I will show her that I am not to be spurned, and my feelings trifled with, for no earthly cause, and I will..."

But here a return of tenderness made the angry lover break off ere he finished the sentence, and pause, for he could not even in thought bring himself to contemplate the possibility of a serious quarrel with her he so fondly loved. Then would come the remembrance of her beauty and winning softness, of those hours of sweet communion and interchange of thought, of their plans for the future, and of her undisguised tenderness; and his love seemed almost increased by the tempest of angry passion that had lately threatened to shake if not to destroy it. He seized the anonymous letter,

and, with a movement of wrath, and an imprecation on the head of the writer, he flung it into the fire, and, as he saw it consume, he exclaimed :—

"Thus perish every doubt of the affection and goodness of my lovely and beloved Louisa. Surely some demon must have prompted the writer of that vile scroll to infuse such horrid thoughts into my mind. How could I ever look into the beautiful eyes of my betrothed, could she but dream that I had allowed a base slanderer, shielded under the covert of a mask that screens him from my just vengeance, to shake, even for a moment, my faith in her! She would despise me, and I almost despise myself for such unpardonable weakness."

With what pleasure does a fond heart dash from it the first doubts that have intruded against a cherished object, and how strong is the gush of renewed tenderness that replaces angry emotions! There was an almost womanly softness in the feelings of Strathern, now that his previous anger had melted away; and, proud as he naturally was, he could have humbled himself, ay, have knelt before Louisa Sydney, were she present, to crave pardon for having even in thought done her such injustice as to doubt her tenderness or worth. He would not allow himself to think of her late coldness or estrangement; or, if it would intrude on his mind, he attributed it to the cause she herself had assigned—indisposition; and he blamed himself

for ever having imagined it could have proceeded from aught else.

While these reflections occupied the mind of Strathern, that of the object of his affection was even more painfully filled.

"How weak and vacillating am I grown!" thought Louisa Sydney, as she reclined in her easy-chair, her head resting on her fair hand, and her eyes cast down. "He has disproved none of the charges made against him, not a single one; and yet, such is his influence over my heart, that no sooner did he urge me with those looks of affection so dear to me, and those tones that are as music to my ear, than I forgot every suspicion, every accusation, and remembered only that *he* was near me, and that I loved! But, could he have met my glance with the earnest gaze of tenderness that returned it, if he loved me not as fondly, as passionately, as he professes? Could his voice have sounded so like truth, and carried such conviction to my heart, if it expressed not the deep, the real tenderness of his? Oh, no! I will not believe that he could so dissemble, so conceal the gross propensities of which he has been accused, as to look and speak the very soul of honour and truth. I will again abandon myself to the happy confidence in his attachment and noble qualities, which have formed the basis of my affection for him, and banish every doubt.

"But *if*—oh! that odious word—if there should be

any truth in the warning poured into my ear by the conjurer! Is it my fond and foolish heart that blinds me, and makes me believe only that which I wish to believe, and renders me the dupe of a—a libertine? Faugh! what a sensation of faintness and disgust steals over me at the thought! Rather would I for ever tear his image from my breast, although in doing so life itself might pay the forfeit, than endure to think that he, on whom I had bestowed my virgin heart, had worn out all the freshness and purity of his in those sensual *liaisons* which unfit a man from being the delicate-minded and honourable companion, as well as the sure guide, of a young and fond wife. Of all mercenary motives I acquit him. Though rich, I am not"—and she glanced with complacency at the mirror near her—"so devoid of personal attractions as to fear that my fortune alone has won him to seek my hand. No, were he steeped in poverty to its very dregs, I would bestow on him the whole of my wealth. Alas! what woman ever gave her heart, that greatest of all her treasures, if it be indeed a true and noble one, who would not follow up the gift by that which is so much less valuable—in *her* estimation, at least—her fortune? What could that woman—that Mrs. Bloxham I think Murray called her—mean by her Burleigh-like shakes of the head and grave looks when she spoke of him? It is evident that her manner made a deep impression on Murray, and she is not wont to attach much im-

portance to trifles. I wish I had asked to see this Mrs. Bloxham—how I hate the vulgar name!—in order to discover what she really knows. But am I indeed fallen so low as to employ one menial to pry into the secrets of another, and relatively, too, to my affianced husband? How would my mother shrink from the bare notion that her daughter should so demean herself! No, I could not descend to that; and yet..... But I will drive it from my thoughts; I will prohibit Murray from ever again reverting to the subject; and I will still the beating of this throbbing heart, meet Strathern with smiles, while it is tortured by doubts and fears; I will do all but break my engagement with him, for that, fond, weak, and infatuated as I am, I feel I have no longer the strength to effect.

"And I, who used to be proud, who believed myself incapable of loving one, however attractive he might be, whom I deemed less elevated in soul, less faultless in conduct, than the standard, the fair ideal I had formed of him who was to be my husband—I can now contemplate the possibility of dragging on the chain of affection, with its links lacerating my soul, from the suspicion of the unworthiness of him I love, rather than at once rend them asunder, lest the doing so might for ever ruin my peace. The most tormenting images are continually presenting themselves to my heated mind ever since I heard him on whom I dote accused of being a libertine. I seem to behold

him in the society of some of those women lost alike to virtue and to shame, smiling at the coarse jest, listening to their ribald conversation, or—oh! worse than that — addressing to one of them those looks, or low, sweet accents, that have so often charmed me. And this was he whom I fondly believed had never loved before he gave his heart to me. But why profane the name of love by supposing that he could have felt such a passion for one whose acquaintance he must blush to acknowledge? No; a man like Strathern could not entertain a preference for one whom he could not esteem or respect; yet, nevertheless, an acquaintance with such persons must have left an indelible stain on his mind, and rendered it unfit to appreciate or repay the devoted attachment of a virtuous and pure-hearted woman.

"How have I turned with horror and disgust from some of my female acquaintances, who had consented to marry men known to have led dissolute lives, and how have I refused assent to the gross and indelicate axiom sometimes pronounced by the coarse-minded, that "reformed rakes make the best husbands!" I dreamt not then that I should ever find myself reduced to contemplate a union with one accused of libertinism. yet here I am forced to admit the possibility of such a measure, or to break off for ever from the first, the only attachment of my life. Which ever step I take, I see nothing before me but misery. Would to Heaven that

I had never heard the insidious whispers of the conjurer, or that, having heard them, I had sufficient courage either to break off my engagement, or to submit, as others of my sex have done, to what is probably the inevitable fate of many—that of wedding a man the recollection of whose previous mode of life must often inflict a pang, and embitter a happiness that might, without this painful remembrance, be indeed perfect! I wonder whether my mother ever experienced any of the bitter emotions that have tortured me during the last night and day. She I know loved, and fondly too, my poor father. Theirs was a marriage of affection; and hers is a sensitive mind, that would have shrank from confiding her destiny to one whose principles and morals were not unexceptionable. How I should like to hear her opinion on this point, if I could do so without her suspecting how deep an interest I take in it — if such a subject could be introduced, and a case like mine hypothetically put to her! Perhaps this may yet be accomplished, and I may be strengthened and consoled by hearing her sentiments."

The soliloquy of the fair and sensitive Louisa Sydney was interrupted by the arrival of Strathern, who came, as he was wont, to spend the evening with his betrothed and her mother. The painful reflection in which both the lovers had indulged during the last day and night had rendered them more than ever

aware of the depth and extent of their affection, and proved to them that it is not in the halcyon hours of love that the influence of that all-engrossing and despotic passion most strongly makes itself felt, but in those trials when doubt, and fear, and jealousy, wring the breast, and the tortured heart owns that its peace and happiness depend wholly on another. There was a gravity mingled in the tenderness with which Strathern addressed the object of his affection; and she was pensive, though no longer cold or *distrait*. Her face was still pale, but, as her lover marked its softened expression, he thought he had never beheld her look more beautiful. His anxiety about her health, revealed by innumerable nameless attentions, the glance of deep interest continually fixed on her countenance, and the subdued tone of his voice when he spoke to her, soothed and reassured her doubts; and she allowed herself to relapse into all the confidence and tenderness established between her lover and herself, previously to the evening of the *bal costumé*. Mrs. Sydney, too, in witnessing the restored good understanding between her daughter and Strathern, recovered her usual equanimity, although an impression was left on her mind that Louisa had evinced caprice or injustice towards her affianced husband, and that *he* had been much hurt by it.

Never had Louisa Sydney been more amiable than on this evening. The consciousness that Strathern

had been wronged, for his presence and unembarrassed manner had wrought that conviction, and that she owed him an atonement, induced her to vanquish the languor and latent feeling of indisposition which still lingered in her frame; and her lover, too deeply interested in her health not to regard with anxious solicitude every symptom that indicated the least derangement of it, felt grateful to her for her exertion to be cheerful, as he marked her changeful cheek and languid smile. He inwardly blamed himself for having attributed to coldness or caprice the change in her manner that had previously given him such pain, but which, he now thought quite clear, had originated in illness, and, in proportion to this conviction, became his self-reproach and anxiety about her. This tender anxiety, revealed in his every glance and word, chased from the mind of Louisa Sydney all the suspicions and consequent fears infused into it by the conjurer. As she sat by his side, and listened to the fond words which he addressed to her in accents which told the deep love that dictated them, she wondered how she ever could have allowed herself to doubt his truth; and she experienced a sense of humiliation at the reflection that the whispers of a masked slanderer could have even for a moment so warped her judgment. No reproaches from another could have produced so salutary an effect on Louisa Sydney as those awakened in her own heart by the

tenderness of Strathern. This very tenderness betrayed such a consciousness on his part of not meriting unkindness, that her natural generosity was excited, and she could, had they then been alone, have confessed her weakness to him, and acknowledged, with deep contrition, the injustice she had done him.

It has been said that the reconciliation of lovers is the renewal of love, and the adage may hold good in some cases. These peculiar ones are, where no harsh words, no angry glances, or unkind observations have passed, when nothing is left to rankle in the memory, nothing to be pardoned by the heart. But when these have occurred, let lovers beware of confiding too much in the efficacy of reconciliations, and carefully eschew all disagreements, as they invariably leave behind a sense of soreness, which, like the painful sensations generally experienced after bodily wounds, even when they appear healed, continue to annoy long after.

This, however, was a happy evening, and the lovers felt it to be so. Nevertheless, both wished that they had not experienced the possibility of being dissatisfied with each other, for their happiness no longer seemed based on so certain a foundation as before, although this experience led to the mutal determination of never again permitting themselves to misinterpret each

other. Strathern tore himself from his lovely Louisa at an earlier hour than usual, that she might seek her pillow; and, as he took the small, white hand which he more than ever longed to call his own at the altar, it no longer refused to return his pressure.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Oh, wisely has it been decreed
That wicked schemers ever need
Some ready tool to lend his aid,
Whose services with gold are paid:
The plotter, while he basely stoops
To use corruption, thinks he dupes
His tool, who in his turn can see
His master is as vile as he,
And will, however large his pay,
His first corruptor sure betray;
Proving such sinful leagues were meant
To bring their own stern punishment.

Lord Alexander Beaulieu was consoled for being, by Doctor Gillingsworth's positive commands, kept a prisoner to his chamber for three days by the release it afforded him from the society of Mrs. Maclaurin, who evinced the utmost anxiety relative to his health, and despatched to him the most tender inquiries every two or three hours.

"I see that I may dictate my own terms to this

dreadful woman," thought Lord Alexander, glancing complacently at his own image, reflected in an opposite mirror. "Really she seems determined to compromise herself completely by this exhibition of her tenderness, yet I feel that I hate her still more for her excessive attachment to me. But it is ever so? I never cared for any woman who loved me much. Heigho! If that fool Fitzwarren had not left Rome, I might be amused by his bringing me the news of the day. Gillingsworth is such an egregious egotist. He talks only of the maladies of his patients, in order that he may introduce proofs of his own skill in treating them; and Durnford, in general so adroit in collecting and retailing the gossip of every place where he is, I cannot spare to go out in search of intelligence. It is lucky that this same Durnford is so devoted to me, for he is a sad rascal; and his quickness of perception in seizing a scheme of mischief, and his ability in carrying it into execution, give such evidence of his talent and rascality, that I am sometimes alarmed lest he should one day or other betray the secrets of which he has got possession. Clever servants are indispensable, but dangerous tools to work with. They must be trusted to a certain degree, or they are sure to blunder; but the plague of it is, they get so sharp-sighted that they discover all that one wants concealed; nay, not only that, but sometimes jump at conclusions far beyond what is really intended.

'Talk of the devil,' as the saying is, for here comes my hopeful valet."

"I have told the cook your lordship's wishes, and your lordship may depend on having an excellent dinner to-day. I have seen the wine put in ice."

"I have been thinking, Durnford, about my plan of your marrying Mademoiselle Justine, the *femme de chambre* of Mrs. Maclaurin."

"I have always had an objection to matrimony, my lord—a very great objection—but if it was made worth my while, and that your lordship had really set your mind on it, I would try to conquer my scruples."

"Why, you unconscionable dog, Mademoiselle Justine is not only a pretty, but a rich woman, and where could you get a more suitable wife, I should like to know?"

"Mademoiselle is, I dare say, all that your lordship has said, but she is clever my lord—too clever for my fancy. If ever I should marry, I should like to find a more simple and quiet young woman. No good ever comes, my lord, of having too clever a wife. They are not to be hoodwinked or deceived; and if, like Mademoiselle Justine, they are up to mischief, a man can never match 'em."

"So you are not disposed to marry this French woman?"

"Not unless it was made worth my while, my lord."

"What do you call made worth your while?"

"A couple of thousand pounds given to me as a marriage portion, my lord."

"Ha! ha! ha! Really, Durnford, you are a most unconscionable fellow. No, my good friend, I have not so completely set my heart on seeing you become the husband of Justine, as to bestow a dowry on you to effect it."

"Just as your lordship pleases; but when a man is asked to give up his liberty, I think it is not unreasonable to expect some compensation for such a sacrifice."

"But, as I before told you, Mademoiselle Justine is, or *will be* rich, richer than you could have expected."

"If so, my lord, it would be rather galling to my pride that all the money should be at her side. It would hurt my feelings to find myself wholly dependant on my wife."

Lord Alexander Beaulieu felt the *coup de patte* aimed at him, by his impertinent servant, and writhed under it, but he endeavoured to conceal his consciousness of it as well as he could, though, had he seen the glance of Durnford, who wished to be certain whether or not his cut had taken effect, he could hardly have mastered his indignation. The valet smiled as he

marked the flushed cheek of his master, but he took care ere he did so to avert his face. Lord Alexander Beaulieu found some excuse for dismissing Durnford from his chamber, and, when the door closed after him, he clinched his hand, set his teeth hard together, and then exclaimed:

"Impudent scoundrel! how I should like to throw him out of the window! The rascal knows that I am about to marry the dreadful Irishwoman; he knows also the consumptive state of my finances, and that this is the *dernière ressource* for repairing them, so that he meant to give me the impertinent hint he just uttered! But I'll not forget it, and will find an opportunity of punishing him when he least expects it."

"Mrs. Maclaurin sends her compliments to your lordship, and hopes you will be able to venture into her apartment to-day. This is the fourth message she has sent since this morning, my lord," said Durnford, entering the apartment.

"Psha!" muttered Lord Alexander Beaulieu, contracting his brows in a mode that indicated any thing but satisfaction at this new proof of the unremitting attention of the lady of his thoughts. "Make my compliments to Mrs. Maclaurin, and say that I hope to be able to wait on her in the evening," replied Lord Alexander; and, when Durnford retreated, he turned up his eyes to the ceiling, as if to invoke pa-

tience, and exclaimed, 'Was ever a man so beset, so tormented as I am by this indefatigable woman!—no peace, no rest from her overwhelming attentions. I had hoped that the plea of illness would have availed to procure me a respite from her *petits soins*, but it has not; so, having now enacted the *rôle* of *malade* long enough to avert all suspicion of my identity with the conjurer, I must even declare myself in a state of convalescence, and face my tormentor. O, Poverty! what ills dost thou inflict on thy luckless victims; and, as if in league with thee, and to add to thy woes, taste conspires to render thy presence more appalling. This last offspring of civilization and refinement inculcates a quick perception of all that is fine or beautiful; and when was admiration known, unaccompanied by the desire of appropriation? which, when indulged, is followed by a host of evils too dreadful to enumerate. Why, O, Destiny! was I, a wretched younger brother, endowed with tastes and appetites which only the fortune of an elder one, and of a wealthy house, too, could supply! To what base uses does poverty compel us!—to smile at the bad jokes of every obtuse Amphitryon who keeps a good cook; to listen to the twaddle of every old dowager who gives *recherché* dinners; to toady every fool who keeps fine hunters for other men to ride, and preserves for other men to shoot in; but, most of all, to wed some monster for her gold, which, if reduced to dust, would be hardly sufficient to blind

those whose eyes are open to her defects and vulgarity, and who view the husbands of such women with sentiments nearly akin to contempt. Psha! I must not think of all this; I must look only on the fair side of the picture, on the power of indulging all one's tastes and desires with the wealth thus acquired. Let me revel, in anticipation, in the delights I mean to enjoy. I will deny myself nothing that money can purchase; and, when I have exhausted old pleasures, I will, like the voluptuary of yore, offer rewards to him who can invent new ones."

This soliloquy was interrupted by the arrival of Doctor Gillingsworth, who, bowing, and eyeing his patient anxiously, commenced the usual inquiries.

"Your lordship is better, I perceive. Yes, certainly better. My treatment has perfectly succeeded: generally—indeed, I may say always—it does. A little fever still remaining—must subdue it. I shall prescribe three new draughts, to be taken in the course of the day; they will, I doubt not, produce the best effect."

"When am I to be allowed something to eat, doctor?" said the pretended invalid, strongly tempted to laugh at the recollection of the succulent repasts he had daily indulged in since he had been ordered to have recourse only to barley-water.

"Not yet, my lord—not yet. This pulse," and he counted the beatings of his patient's pulse, "is not in a

state to warrant my permitting your lordship to take any solid sustenance. A little *very* weak chicken-broth, with a small, a very small piece of toast, is all that I can at present allow. If in another week every feverish symptom subsides, I will permit your lordship a more generous diet. Believe me, I am most anxious for your lordship's convalescence ; and the anxiety of your fair neighbour, who has sent for me to report progress on your lordship's case, has increased my impatience for your recovery. A very charming lady, my lord — very charming, indeed. A very superior understanding, and great knowledge of the world."

" O, thou base worldling and hypocrite !" thought Lord Alexander Beaulieu, disgusted with the fulsome panegyrics of the doctor on Mrs. Maclaurin, the only notice of which he took was a very cold and stiff nod of the head. " The fact, doctor, is," said Lord Alexander, " that I now feel so perfectly well, that I do not require a continuation of your visits ; and therefore permit me to thank you for your skill and care, of which I have had such satisfactory proofs ;" and he handed the diurnal fee to the physician.

" But really, my lord, if you will allow me to advise, I would just hint the prudence of your lordship's continuing under my care for another week. All danger of a relapse will then be removed, and I shall feel satisfied of your perfect safety."

" A thousand thanks, doctor, for your kindness, of

which, however, I will not any longer avail myself, as I now feel my health, thanks to your care, quite re-established."

"I hope your lordship won't have any cause to repent this unwise measure; and, above all, I trust, my lord, you will observe great abstemiousness in your *régime*; and, wishing you a happy termination to your convalescence, I have the honour to take my leave."

Lord Alexander Beaulieu was on the point of breaking into a hearty laugh, when the door again opened, and Doctor Gillingsworth entered.

"Beg pardon, my lord—beg pardon; but may I entreat the favour of your lordship's recommendation to any of your lordship's friends or acquaintances who may happen to be taken ill at Rome? A very unhealthy climate, my lord; miasma very injurious, and particularly to English constitutions. I have studied the climate, its peculiarities, and the maladies to which it subjects strangers. Your lordship has undergone the penalty of the Roman malaria, and, I flatter myself, can speak favourably of my mode of treating its effects."

"Certainly, doctor, I will not fail to recommend you."

While this interview was taking place between Lord Alexander Beaulieu and Doctor Gillingsworth, Justine, the *femme de chambre* of Mrs. Maclaurin, stepped in to pay a visit to Durnford, the *valet de chambre* of his lordship.

"Ah! you not good lover; not attentive, no vay, Monsieur Dornfort. I come to see vat you do. Ven *les messieurs* vil not come to *les dames*, *les dames* are obliged to go to *les messieurs*. But dis is only in England; in France—*la belle France*—*les messieurs* are more polite."

"All that's very well, my pretty Justine; but I'll be hanged if in all France you can find a fellow who loves you as well as I do, although no later than two hours ago I refused to marry you."

"*Quelle idée!* Refuse to marry me! Ven dere is not von day dat you not tell me you are so impatient, so very impatient to marry me. Vat does dis mean, Monsieur Dornfort?

"It only means, my pretty Justine, that my lord and master has a particular desire that you and I should be wedded."

"Vat is dat vedded? I do not understand."

"It is another word for being married."

"*Mon Dieu, quel langage barbare!*" and Mademoiselle Justine shrugged her shoulders, and turned up her eyes like a true Parisian. "But vy for milor vish you and me married?"

"He has his own reasons, you may be sure, for he is a deep one, I can tell you, and does nothing without some motive. It may be that, finding you so pretty, Justine, and your mistress so plain, he thinks the sight of your face might console him for being compelled to look on hers."

"*Quelle bétise!*" and Justine affected to look shocked.

"Or it may be," resumed Durnford, "that he thinks it will better suit his purposes and interests to have us both married. Be this as it may, he proposed the measure to me this morning, and I said that if the matter was made well worth my while I would not object, but otherwise I had rather a prejudice against matrimony."

"*Oh! le mauvais sujet.*"

"He asked me what I meant by being made worth my while, and I answered that if I got two thousand pounds as a marriage portion I would wed you. He directly grew cool on the subject, said you would have a very comfortable fortune of your own, and in short bowed out of the affair, looking devilishly angry into the bargain, at having his scheme defeated. It vexed me to see him wishing to dispose of me according to his own will and pleasure, yet refusing to come down with any money, so I gave him a rub that I saw hit him hard. What do you think I said to him, Justine?"

"How can I tell? You talk of rubs, and hit hard. I not know vat all dat means."

"I said I would not like to marry a wife for her money, or to be dependant on one, and he grew red in the face and looked very angry."

"*Ah! je sens, je sens,* I see vat you mean. You mean dat you not like to do vat he is going to do. Dat is vat we call in France *un coup de patte,* much

better vay to say it dan your English rubs and hit hard, vich mean noting. *Cetoit bien mal-honnête.* It vas very impertinent, Monsieur Dornfort, and I am surprise your master not turn you avay. If he had de honour to be French nobleman he vould, but de English are so *bête* dey not know vat is right."

"As you are going to marry an Englishman, Ma'mselle Justine, I don't think you ought to speak against my nation. I don't like it at all, I can tell you."

"Bah! don't be fool. I not speak against de English *valets de chambres*, I only speak of de masters."

"Oh, that's quite another affair. You may abuse them as much as you like."

"And so you refuse to your master to marry me! Oh! *quelle bonne farce*, ven ve two do so lofe von anoder dat ve marry even if he not like it."

"Nevertheless, my pretty Justine, if I can manage to get some money out of my lord, if even only a few hundreds to add to your five thousand, it will be all the better. We will set up an hotel in a fashionable street, and soon make a fortune, as many others have done who commenced business with less money."

"All dat is ver well, but I be not in such hurry to leave madame vile I can make ver moche more moneys vid her. You know not vat I make her do. Ven she has one robe costs twenty guineas I say she not look vell in it, and she gives it to me at vonce. Same ting

vid pelisses, shawls, cloaks, and *chapeaux*. She vill never vear one ting I say is ugly, or dat makes her look so, and as I every veek find out dat someting does spoil her appearance, you may suppose dat I get ever so many tings vich I sell for moche moneys. Oh! de place of madame is ver good for dat, so I not like to give it up."

"You may be sure, Justine, the place will become a much less profitable one after my master has married your mistress, for he will spend her money so fast that he will leave little for her use."

"Ah! you tink so, Mr. Dornfort! Vell, I tink de same, and I say, is it better for me to let dis fool mistress of mine marry dis milor dat has ver little moneys, and I know if he had moche he not marry an ugly and vulgar voman like madame, or for me to prevent it?—and after I tought and tought many times till my poor head have de pain, I tought if I can make dis milor give me five tousand pounds, vich makes von hundred and twenty-four tousand francs in French moneys, I vill have her to marry him. If, *au contraire*, dis milor not consent to let me have his bond for dat sum, I vill never let madame marry him, so . . . ."

"There is my lord's bell. I must leave you, my pretty Justine; but do let me have one kiss before we part."

"Vell, just von, and no more, and take care you not *chiffon* my ribbons or my hair."

"You Frenchwomen always think a great deal more about your ribbons than your lover, and . . . . . Oh! there's that plaguy bell again."

Durnford hastily imprinted a kiss on the cheek of Mademoiselle Justine, and hurried to the chamber of his master, while she returned to the apartment of Mrs. Maclaurin, fully determined, now that she was aware that once that lady became a wife, her profusion would be checked, to obtain as much as possible from her before that event took place, or, in vulgar phraseology, to make hay while the sun was shining.

Durnford was summoned to assist his master to a warm bath, after which a *recherché* dinner that would not have shamed that prince of Amphitrytons, Lucullus himself, was served to the epicurean; and while Lord Alexander Beaulieu did ample justice to the skill of the cook, and his own *savoir faire* in the selection of the dishes ordered, he more than once smiled at the notion that while he was thus indulging his appetite he was supposed by his future *cara sposa* to be strictly following the most severe *régime*. "I must arrange when I am married not to have that creature to dine with me. I never could stand it, for it spoils my appetite to see her devour her food, just as much as when I used to see wild beasts fed at the Zoological Gardens in London, a sight which always made me loathe my dinner that day."

Such were the thoughts that passed through the

mind of this heartless voluptuary as he sipped his well-iced champagne, contemplating with no slight satisfaction that henceforth he need not depend on the hospitality of acquaintances for the luxuries hitherto only obtained at their cost, as the ample wealth of her whom, though he despised and disliked, he was about to wed, would secure him all the indulgences which, to his sensual nature, formed the pleasures, if not the happiness, of life. And yet, while dwelling with immeasurable satisfaction on the advantages to be obtained by the large fortune of Mrs. Maclaurin, no sentiment of good will or gratitude were excited in his breast for her who was to bestow it on him. No, hardened by his intercourse with the worldly, which aroused into action all the selfishness of his nature, Lord Alexander Beaulieu thought only of securing the means and appliances to administer to his own grovelling appetites, and would not merely have denied every luxury to her who brought him wealth, but would gladly have seen her expire as soon as she had invested him with it.

Yet this was the man who was pronounced, by the generality of his acquaintances, to be "a devilish good sort of fellow, as times go." To be sure, his selfishness was universally known, but this was so common a defect among those with whom he associated that it ceased to be considered one, and was only commented on when some exercise of it interfered with or

crossed the equal selfishness of one of his *soi-disant* friends, who would exclaim, "Hang that fellow, Beaulieu! what a selfish animal he is! Would you believe it?—he refused to let me off a foolish wager I made with him, or to let me have his bay horse, unless I paid him thrice its value." Many of the persons who accused Lord Alexander Beaulieu, practised no less selfishness themselves, consequently, he, fully aware of this fact, was unconscious of being, in any degree, more faulty than others; or, if he ever reflected on the matter—which, with his habits, it is not likely he ever did—he would have been disposed to plume rather than to disparage himself, for the possession of this all-engrossing devotion to self. He had a very unfavourable opinion of the world—founded, perhaps, on his knowledge of one specimen of the genus, who form its aggregate—and that specimen was no other than himself. He believed men capable of every meanness, if not of every crime, because he felt that, in his own case, the stings of conscience, or the dictates of honour, were alike powerless to induce him to relinquish any scheme that might tend to further his acquisition of wealth, or enjoyment of pleasure. High-minded and noble characters were above his comprehension, for he had no sympathy with any such persons, nay, it would be difficult, if not totally impossible, to convince him of their existence; but, if convinced, he would, in all

human probability, have smiled at them in contemptuous derision, as weak men, Quixotic fools, born to be dupes to clever persons like himself.

It frequently occurred to him to desire to know whether his machinations to sow dissension between Miss Sydney and Strathern had been attended with success. He had given instructions to Durnford to admit the latter if he called, calculating that Doctor Gillingsworth would not fail to give sufficient publicity to his feigned indisposition to draw inquiries to his door from those whom he considered to be his friends. Those among them whom he least wished to see did call, but Strathern contented himself with sending his servant to inquire; so here his curiosity was defeated.

"Did you see Mr. Strathern's servant when he called?" demanded he of Durnford.

"No, my lord, he merely inquired after your lordship's health, of the porter, and left his master's card."

"While I am absent at Mrs. Maclaurin's, I wish you would endeavour to see that person—Mrs. Bloxfield, is not that her abominable name?"

"Bloxham, my lord?"

"And discover from her whether she knows how matters are going on at Mrs. Sydney's — whether Mr. Strathern is as frequently there as formerly—in short, find out all you can from that gossiping old

woman, whom you told me was a crony of Miss Sydney's superannuated *femme de chambre*."

"Your lordship shall be made acquainted with every particular."

"But mind, Durnford, you must on no account let this Mrs. Bloxham suspect that *I* have the least curiosity in the world on the subject. I have the greatest objection that this should be even guessed at."

"Your lordship need not be in the least alarmed. I am always on my guard, and Mrs. Bloxham is so indefatigable in getting news of every thing, and about every body, and so desirous of relating all she hears to whoever may fall in her way, that it is seldom necessary to ask her any question."

"And now I must pay my visit to Mrs. Maclaurin. Heighho!" and Lord Alexander Beaulieu extended his mouth to its utmost dimensions in a yawn, and his arms to their widest extent in a position that proved more than words could have done, the overwhelming sense of weariness and *ennui* which the thoughts of the anticipated interview with that lady occasioned him. Nevertheless, he bestowed his usual pains in adorning his person, insisted on his *valet de chambre's* brushing into a more becoming form a refractory lock that waved over his temples, changed no less than three neckcloths ere he was satisfied with the tie, and commanded a more than ordinary portion of Eau de Portugal to be sprinkled on his pocket handkerchief,

as a precaution against the powerful odour of the dainties with which Mrs. Maclaurin was in the habit of regaling herself at various hours in the day, to the no slight annoyance of the olfactory nerves of her *soi-disant* admirer. "Go and inquire if Mrs. Maclaurin is at home and ready to receive my visit."

"Yes, my lord," and off hurried Durnford, while his master, taking another look at himself in the Psyche glass, slowly followed him.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"By change of scene men often try
From dull ennui and care to fly,
And fondly hope to leave behind
The thoughts that weigh upon the mind;
But soon they're forced to own how vain
Is change of scene to banish pain—
Man bears within, wherc'er he goes,
That which destroys, or gives repose."

"Well, hang me if it didn't give me a queer sort of feeling when I saw that Livy was so cut up at my leaving her," said Lord Fitzwarren to his travelling companion, Mr. Webworth, as, seated side by side in his well-appointed carriage, they rolled rapidly along, leaving the City of the Cæsars behind them. "The poor girl," resumed he, "behaved devilish well, I must say, for, though greatly moved, she restrained her tears, knowing that I can't bear having lachrymose scenes."

"Yeth, Lady Olivia ith a vewy chaming pethon," said, or rather lisped Mr. Webworth, whose pronunciation had the peculiarity of always omitting the letter R.

"I don't know about her being very charming, as you call it, Webworth, but she is a deuced good sort of girl as times go, and very much attached to me."

"Yeth, vewy."

"I sometimes almost wish she was *not* so devilish fond of me. I swear to you I do, for were she less so, or were I quite convinced that the disappointment would not break her heart, I should be tempted to break off my engagement to her, for I'll be hanged if I know why I entered into it, nor do I feel at all towards her as I did towards Miss Sydney—that is, I'm not at all in love with Livy."

"Indeed, how vewy odd!"

"The fact is, Webworth, Livy, poor girl, fell in love with me. 'Twasn't her fault, poor thing, nor mine neither, for the matter of that. You'd be surprised if you knew the number of girls that have taken a fancy to me. Miss Sydney was the only one who was not ready to say 'yes,' before I asked 'will you?' And yet, strange to say, she is the only girl I ever really cared for."

"She's a vewy lovely cweathure, I musth confeth."

"I wish I had never seen her, for somehow or other, she's always running in my head, and when I

look at poor Livy, and see how unlike, and I must add, how inferior she is to Louisa, I get so out of conceit with her, that I long to break off the engagement. There's no more comparison between the two girls than between my beautiful mare Fanny—you remember Fanny?—and Cotsmore's mare, Brown Bess. The one thorough-bred, small-boned, full of blood, and with high action; and the other, heavy-limbed, clumsy, and slow in her paces."

"But, my good fellow, it's too late to find all thith out now, and, as Lady Olivia is so vewy much attached to you, you ought to banish Mith Thydney from you mind."

"And so I try to do, but it's not so easily accomplished, I can tell you. That pretty face of hers is continually recurring to my mind, and that fine shape. Then what a stepper she is! By Jove, I never saw a creature more perfect in her paces since my poor Fanny. Ah, Webworth, if that girl had but taken a fancy to me she might have managed me just as she pleased; but the devil of it is, that all the women I don't care a farthing for are jumping to have me, and this, the only one I ever loved, would hardly condescend to look at me."

"It thertainly ith vewy dithagueeable, my dear fellow, vewy dithagueeable indeed, and it ith much to be wished that you had not pwopothed to Lady Olivia."

"And the deuce of it is, Webworth, that I don't

see the least chance of getting out of the scrape, for poor Livy is *so* fond of me, and so deuced good-natured, that, do what I will, she never gets angry, though I see it almost breaks the poor thing's heart to see me always going away to one place or another. Now there are some women who would take huff at once, and say, 'You may go to the ——, and never come back, for I won't have you.' I tried to get Livy's mettle up several times, in the hope that she would get angry and break off our engagement, but it was all in vain. She loves me too well, poor girl, and would put up with anything rather than lose me. One consolation I shall have, however, which is, that I shall have my own way on every point when we're married. I have taken care of this, and broken her in well, I can tell you. She is always ready to cry amen to everything I say; and this will be a great comfort, won't it?"

"Yeth, cetainly, a vewy gweat comfot indeed."

"But isn't it strange, Webworth, that knowing this, and knowing also that, if Miss Sydney had consented to have me, she would have had everything her own way,—ay, and would probably have made me give up racing and hunting, and my clubs; for I was so bewitched by her that I could refuse nothing that she wished, yet I cannot help every day—ay, by Jove, every hour—regretting that she is not to be my wife, and envying that fellow Strathern for winning such a

prize. This it is to be in love," and Lord Fitzwarren drew a deep sigh. "Were you ever in love, Webworth?"

"Not that I wewembe."

"Not that you remember! Why, what a strange fellow you must be? If you were once hard hit, as I call it—that is, really in love—you would never forget it, I can tell you, for it's no joke. Heighho!"

"Many pethons have told me tho, but I thuppothe the's a gweat deal in imagination. One petthy gil seemth to me to be so extuemely like anothe petthy gil, that I neve could make out how a man cath moe about one of them than anothe, tho I conclude that it muth be all imagination."

"Ha, ha, ha! 'Pon my soul, Webworth, you are a devilish droll fellow, and make me laugh whether I will or not. The postboys get along famously. I had no notion that these cursed Italians, or their horses either, could go at such a pace. There's something exhilarating in the rapid movement of a well-built travelling carriage, bowled along by four horses; and though those that are pulling mine on are no great things to look at, they are quite equal in speed to our English ones. The rude harness and rope-traces did, to be sure, shock me at first when I travelled, but I have now got accustomed to all that sort of thing? Have you?"

"I neve noticeth it, fou I genally fall athleep when

I tuavel. All I eve wemark on the woad ith the bad dinneth and bueakfasths."

"I have taken care to guard against them by having a regular supply of edibles with me. My courier put up a *pâté de perigord*, which I had from Paris expressly for my journey, with a ham from Bayonne, some chickens, Bologna sausages, and a few other things, so we shan't be starved, my dear Webworth."

"Did you oda any wine to be put up with the eatableth? If not, you will find the stuff to be had at the inns not duinakable."

"I am not so young a traveller as to forget the wine—ay, or good white French brandy either. My fellow has laid in a provision."

"You aue just the fellow I like to tuavel with, my dea Fitzwauen, you undestand comfot."

"It's odd how much lighter my spirits get as I remove further from Rome! I haven't felt so cheerful since the unlucky day I was such a fool as to propose for Livy. Now that I am safe off, all that foolish engagement seems like a dream, and a devilish disagreeable one, too. I wish from the bottom of my heart it was but a dream. Heigho!"

"You will spoil all you comfot by thinking about it, my dea fellow. When any dithagueeable thing occuth to me, I make it a point neva to think of it."

"A very wise plan, but one which does not always

depend on onesself to adopt. If it did, who would ever be unhappy?"

"Oh! the au some pethens tho foolish that they au always fuetting about one thing au anothe, when, if they would think moe of a good dinna and wine they might foget the twoubleth. I know but one tuue cause fo grief."

"And what is that, my good fellow?"

"Not having enough money to have evewy day a capital dinna, and the best wine. With these tholid comfots I can't imagine how any sensible man can be unhappy."

"Well, you are easily satisfied, I must say, Webworth. But you don't allow the mind, then, to have any influence in one's happiness?"

"Thetainly not. One's mind ought to be ath much in one's own powe as one's hand au foot; I know mine ith."

"Then all I can say is that you're a devilish lucky dog. But what do you think about—when you're alone, for instance?"

"I think about my bueakfast, au my dinna, au my thuppa. I wonda whethe it will be ath good as I expect, and I get up my appetite by thinking of it; and tho I have a fuesh inteuest eveuy day, thumthing to look fouaud to twice or thuee times in the twenty-fou hous; and if that ith not enough to occupy any thensible man's mindt, I know not whath ith."

"I thought you were to be brought into parliament at one time by your cousin, Lord Amesbury. How did it go off, Webworth?"

"I at fist acthepted the pwoposal of Amesbuwy, who meely wanted to put me in ath a *locum tenens* until his thon became of age. But when I found that he expected me to be a constant attendant at the House of Commons to vote on evewy question, by which I should lose my dinna on an avewage thuee days in evewy week, au come in when evewy *entuée* worth eating wath spoiled, I declined, fo it would have completely destuoyed my comfot and happineth. Amesbuwy took it into his head to be affuonted with me, becauth I would not sacrifice my comfot to please him, and theue the affaia ended."

"But having no occupation — nothing to do — don't you often find the time hang heavy on your hands?"

"Neva, I wead all the cookewy books that au published, make notes of the beth dinneth that au given in the theathon, and the beth wines in the houtheth, and by making these notes I neve fouget which to thelect, and this ith always an occupation. I can tell in what houtheth one should take au avoid ceutain dishes au wines, which ith the besth countuy houtheth to acthept invitations to, tho how, my good fellow, with this constant occupation can I find time eveu hang heavy on my hands?"

"Then you don't care whether the houses are pleasant or not, Webworth?"

"No houth can be unpleathant, wheue the owneus au not stingy, and wheue the cook is a peufet autist!"

"But agreeable people, do they count for nothing?"

"I hate what au called agueeable people. They only seuve to duaw off one's attention fuom what is infinitely moue agueeable, in my opinion—a good dinna. I have always obseuved that wheue these thame agueeable pethons au to be found, the *entuées* guo cold before one is helped, fou when they aue telling thei *on-dits* and anecdotes, people leave the seuvants waiting at theiu elbow with the *entuées*, while they either listen au laugh, tho when the *plat* comes to a fellow like me, who having no title, am seuved about the lasth, it is not wouth eating. No, give me the houtheth whe the dinna is the whole and thole object with all who sith down to table, and whe the pleasue of eathing ith not intewupted by uthleth conveuthation, nau the digestion twoubled afte dinna by too much attention to it."

"By Jove, Webworth, you have reflected gravely on the subject of eating! It seems to have occupied your whole attention."

"It thetainly has, for what othe subject ith, ou could be half tho inteuesting to me? People don't weflect half enough on this point, and the conthe-

quence ith that though they have good cooks, and spae no expenth, they theldom have a good dinna. If men gave due consideuation to this impoutant thubject, they neveu would invite a thecond time any gueth who did not come puncthually to the houa witten on the caud of invitation. How many good and *recheché* dinnas have I not theen spoiled by having been kept waiting a half houa and longa, because the gueths had not the politeneth to awive in time, and I have heud these same guesths at their clubs, that night, complain how cold the vewy same dinnas weu, which they had kept waiting, and attack the weputation of a good cook, afteu having defeated his exetions to display histh talenth."

"You grow positively eloquent on this topic, my dear Webworth. I had no notion you had studied it so profoundly," said Lord Fitzwarren.

"I don't think we eva conveused on it befoc. Indeed, in thothiety one neva has time to enta guavely on any subject, howeva intuesting; it ith only twavelling *téte-à-téte*, ath we au now, in a comfotable cawiage, with the pleasing puerspective of a good dinna, that I could take the tuouble of entwing on thuch a thubject."

"Hang me, Webworth, if I don't think you a devilish deal more clever fellow than I took you to be; and if I don't consider you wiser than most, if not any of our mutual friends, in circumscribing your

happiness to one focus, and that one so easily to be acquired."

"By the wealthy, yeth, but by the pooa, no. You foget that I am a pooa devil, who have only enough to buy bwead and cheese, as folks thay, two things vewy well in thei way, ath accessowies with vayous otheu good things, but by themselves only fit for clowns."

"But though not rich, surely you can always afford a good dinner; that costs so little."

"*Cela dépend, mon che!* A tough beefsteak, mutton, with *pain à discetion*, cutlet, washed down with *vin oudinaie*, might thatithfy thome men, and costsh little, I gwant, but such faye dithgusth me, and unleth I meet with thome hothpitable fellow like youthelf to give a good dinna, I am left without one, for a coffee-houth dinna at ou clubs is my avesion. Fitzwauen, you au a lucky dog, and ought to be one of the happiest fellowth alive, yet you allow youthelf to be fwetted about women, which I cannot undestand. I only know that if I had but even one quata of you fotune, I should conside mythelf the happiest fellow in the whole wold."

"But that would not be enough to keep up an establishment, Webworth, nor horses, nor to allow of your indulging in various other little pleasures."

"'Twould be enough to allow me a thmall comfotable bachela's house, a capital cook, and an easy

Buoughan, with two stwong hortheth to dwaw it about, a vewy good easy chai, a comfotable thofa, a Fwench bed, and what moe could a thenthible man desie to make him happy?"

"Well, I must say, my dear Webworth, that you are not unreasonable in your wishes, and I can only add, that you shall never want a good dinner while I have one, and that you may reckon on sure winter quarters at whichever of my places I happen to be at, so long as I live."

"Thanks, my dea Fitzwauen; you have always been moath kind to me, and I feel it deeply, I athue you"

"And what is more, my good fellow, I will take care to secure you an annuity, for your life, of three hundred and sixty-five guineas a-year, which will give you a guinea a-day towards providing you a good dinner a-day—nay, by Jove! as you will always have a room at each of my places in the country, and the run of my house, you can put by your guinea a-day for the six months, my dear fellow, and so have two a-day for the season in London."

"I am quite ovepoweed by you vewy geat kindneth, my dea Fitzwauen, and feel at a loth how to thank you."

"I want no thanks, my good fellow. What's the good of being rich, if one don't help those who are less fortunate in that respect. I'll have the deed of

annuity drawn up the moment I get back to England; and, lest any accident should occur to me before then, I'll just add a codicil to my will, which I always carry about with me in my writing-box."

"I am not able to expewth what I feel, I assure you I am not, Fitzwauen, fo this act of fwiendship on you paat to me, who have no claim whateva on you genewosity."

"Not a word more on the subject, my dear Webworth. You, I am quite sure, would have done just as much for me, were our positions exchanged, and I have real satisfaction in being of use to you."

"I wish that I, in tun, could be of uth to you, but I know only one way in which I can puove my thenth of you fuiendship. I'll take you *chef-de-cuithine* undeu my especial chage, when we go back to England, and I answea fou it you dinnaus shall be the most *recheché* in London. I understandth the sot of thing, and it will be an agueable occupation fou me. But I thee we aye come to ou halting-place, which I am glad of, ath I am well dithpothed to dine. I hope you couyier has had the good thenth to have thome thoup weady, and whateve elthe the inn can affod, for one thometinthe in these sot of places hits on a tolewable *plat nationale*, and that offe's a vawiety that is agueable."

"I dare say my fellow has done right, for he is sharp, and has all his wits about him. Here he

comes, stumping along in his jack-boots to welcome us, with a face red from the fire, where probably he has been assisting to prepare some delicacy of his *façon* for our dinner. I hope these clumsy postillions will not break the pole of my carriage in the sharp turn to the inn door. How the fellows hollo, and gallop. By Jove, we had a narrow escape there! Well, here we are, my boy. Any chance of a good dinner, eh, Frazzini?"

"Ah! milor, I vork and vork—see my face, so burn vid fire. Cuisinier not moche good. I have made de *menestra*, dat is de soupe, and I have de *côtellettes*, and de *poulet roti*; and I have de room broshed, and I do mon possible to make milor comfortable."

"Come along, Webworth. Egad! my legs are so cramped, that I can hardly walk. Let us have dinner as soon as possible, Frazzini, for I am as hungry as a hunter. Belton, have the provisions and some wine unpacked immediately. Now, mind and take care you don't shake the wine."

"Be tho good, Belton, as to keep the bottles on thei thidthe," said Webworth, with an anxious face, "and thee if you cannot procua thome ithe."

Lord Fitzwarren and his friend entered the inn, preceded by Frazzini, while Belton, looking after them, shrugged his shoulders, and muttered to the other servant, who was already beginning to unpack the light *fourgon* which contained the provisions—

"Always thinking of his stomach, and giving trouble, and never letting one see the colour of his money for all that. I wonder what my lord can see in him, I am sure, that he saddles himself with him, lumbering up his carriage, and franking him all through his journey. Bundle out the things, Thomas. Come, be quick."

"I'm afraid of shaking the wine," answered Thomas.

"Never mind, they'll drink it all the same, I warrant me; and if *they* don't *I* will. I know my lord don't much care about it; and, as to that screw Webworth, I'm glad to spite him, for he's always giving trouble, and trying to put my lord up to things which would injure my place."

"Ah! Mr. Belton," observed Thomas, "it's not to be told how these sort of gentlemen — who are not, after all, gentlemen — injure poor servants. Being poor, they are obliged to look sharp after every shilling, so they get to know the real value of things as well as *we* do; and then they put our masters up to it, which spoils our just perquisites."

"There, Thomas, give that bottle of old sherry a good shake, and that will secure the greater part of it to me, for Mr. Webworth, forsooth, is so particular, that if it is not as clear as amber he won't touch it."

Thomas did as he was told, laughing while he performed the command of his superior, Mr. Belton, the *valet de chambre* of Lord Fitzwarren, to whom the

domestics of his lordship paid much more attention than to their noble master.

"Bring a bottle of port wine for my use, Thomas, and be sure to shake it as little as possible. Keep it on its side, and walk steadily — I'll uncork it myself. I hope that foreign humbug, Frazzini, has taken care to have my dinner ready. I can't abide these d—d Italian or French fellows; but one can't do without them when one is travelling in their shabby countries, and don't speak their outlandish lingoes. I'm sure this *courier*, as he calls himself, makes a good profit by my lord on the road. It goes to my heart to see foreigners making money of Englishmen."

"Yes, Mr. Belton, so it does mine, too; but, as you justly say, it can't be helped, but it's a great pity."

"Take out the dressing-case, Thomas, and the chaise-seat, and have the imperial taken down. Lock the carriage-doors, bring me the key, and I'll step and see whether my lord wants anything. But here comes Frazzini, hurrying and bustling about as if *he* did everything."

"Milor vant de *pâte de foi gras, la poularde, et le jambon*."

"Here they are, Mr. Longboots."

"Vill you bring some of dese tings in vid me, Monsieur Tomas?"

"How can I? Don't you see I have the dressing-boxes, and chaise-seat, and himperials to bring in?"

"*Diavolo!* some von moste help me — I have not four hands."

"You can take one thing at a time, though, Mr. Currier."

"Vy not you help me, Monsieur Belton, or make Tomas help?"

"Because it is neither of our places. *You* are the currier, and it's *your* business to see that my lord has everything comfortable on the road."

"*Corpo di Bacco!* 'Tis nuff to make von mad! O de English servant, vat peoples, vat peoples! But milor must not be keep vaiting; so I take von ting in von arm, and von in de oder, and I come back. But you vill bring de vine?"

"Not I."

"Tomas, vill you?"

"How can I, Mr. Frazzini, when I have more to do than I can manage?"

Off hurried the courier, bearing a *pâté* in one hand, and a ham in the other, the two English servants smiling in derision at his activity; and, when he was out of sight, Belton said—

"I would not let any one but him take the wine, for now he'll get the blame of its being shaken. I like to get these beastly foreigners into a scrape."

"So do I, Mr. Belton, for they're always trying to take the bread out of our mouths."

Though even the fastidious Webworth was compelled

to acknowledge that—thanks to the indefatigable exertions of the good-tempered and active courier—a much better dinner was served than could have been expected on so short a notice, the wine was, owing to the shaking given to it by Thomas, undrinkable ; and none that could be procured at the inn could console him for the loss of the old sherry with which he had anticipated to wash down the savoury viands that composed the repast with which he had so plentifully indulged his appetite. He made many and peevish remonstrances to Frazzini for his alleged want of attention in having shaken the wine, *malgré* all the assertions of the Italian to the contrary ; for, conscious that he had moved it as cautiously as possible, the courier felt much hurt at the censure bestowed on him. He, nevertheless, when Lord Fitzwarren's dinner was removed, and before he thought of satisfying his own hunger, went to the chamber designed for Mr. Webworth, and, finding that not a single article for that gentleman's use had been brought up from the carriage, he, having obtained the key from Mr. Belton, who was dining as luxuriously as his master, conveyed to Mr. Webworth's chamber all that appertained to that gentleman, and arranged the bed, and saw that a good fire was lighted in the brasier to air the room, murmuring to himself while he did so, in Italian, which we render into our language—

"O, those English servants! what selfish persons

they are, thus to neglect the friend of their master, who, having no domestic of his own on the journey, would be left to want everything if I did not attend to his comfort! And yet he is continually finding fault with all I do; but, poor man, he can't help it, I dare say; it is his country, where the sun so seldom shines, and those dreadful fogs, of which I have heard so much, that has soured his mind. Ah! who would be well or happy without sunshine and a clear atmosphere? It is the want of these blessings that renders the English, with all their wealth, so difficult to be pleased, that the greatest luxuries cannot content them, and even their pampered servants have the same dissatisfied notions. Eat—eat at every post, finding everything bad, yet devouring all, and pouring liquid fire, in the shape of *eau de vie*, down their throats, which inflames their blood, and makes their tempers so bad. Ah, Giovanni Frazzini! thank God that, though poor, you are happier than these proud islanders!"

CHAPTER XXV.

"The heart where Love hath made its nest
Will find him a tormenting guest,
As 'tis by long experience shown
That never doth he come alone;
Doubt, fear, wild jealousy, and pain,
Are aye attendants in his train,
Nor leave him till he sinks to sleep,
When they no longer vigils keep;
And those who did his stings deplore
Lament that he can wound no more."

Sunshine was again restored to the breast of Louisa Sydney, and if any doubt of the devoted attachment of her lover still lingered there, it was so faint, that she was almost, if not quite, unconscious of its existence. The chagrin she had lately experienced made her appreciate still more highly her present happiness, and she determined never more to allow her mind to be poisoned by so unworthy a guest as suspicion, and henceforth to forget that she was that which so many

envy and desire to be—an heiress. Strathern, while he felt his passion for her increased by the recent misunderstanding between them, which had alarmed him into a dread of losing her, was also aware that his confidence in the stability of her affection had received a shock from the effects of which time alone could remove the trace, and that he no longer, as previously, believed her temper to be as faultless as he had once imagined it to be. He, nevertheless, concealed in his own breast "the change that had come over the spirit of his dream," and Louisa, even with the piercing eyes of love, could detect nothing to alarm or displease her in his manner. Mrs. Sydney, gratified at witnessing the good understanding re-established between the lovers, soon forgot that it had ever known any interruption, and abandoned herself to the happiness founded on a belief that her daughter's would soon be irrevocably secured by a union with the only man she had ever considered worthy of her hand.

But, while peace was restored to those so dear to each other, and Hope, the enchantress, smiled most brightly on them, there was one person beneath the roof of Mrs. Sydney who marked the renewal of affection between Louisa and Strathern with regret. This was no other than Nurse Murray, whose mind had been worked on by the frequently-repeated misrepresentations of Mrs. Bloxham, until she had learned to think that a marriage between her young lady and

Mr. Strathern would be the greatest evil that could befal her on whom she doated. The imprudent confidence reposed in her by Miss Sydney on her return from the masked ball, a confidence which that young lady had never ceased to regret, had awakened strong suspicions in her breast that the charges preferred against Mr. Strathern were not wholly unfounded. From the commencement of Louisa's attachment for him, the nurse saw, or fancied that she saw, a marked diminution in the confidence and affection of her young mistress towards herself. This change, which was but the result of the maidenly reserve peculiar to a first love, alarmed and pained the devoted but somewhat selfish feelings of Murray, who thus reasoned:—

"If, before they are married, he so entirely engrosses all her affection, as thus to estrange her confidence from me, who have never left her a day since her birth —from me, who dote on her as I did on her father, who was dear to me as my own child—him whom I fostered at my breast—what may I expect when she becomes his wife? I saw she was displeased with me for advising her to pause, and not to shut her ears against advice. She has never shown me the same liking or confidence ever since—has never seemed to notice my lowness of spirits, my altered looks; she who used to remark the least change in me, and comfort and console me whenever I was unhappy! I am now become but little necessary to her happiness,

though mine depends entirely on her, and I soon shall cease to be regarded by her—nay, more, in all probability her husband will find out that I am too old and awkward to be lady's-maid to one so fair and youthful, and whom he will desire to see decorated to the utmost advantage, or to travel with them as rapidly as young people like them are accustomed to travel, and I shall be pensioned off, or sent to her seat, to pass the remainder of my days away from my darling, as her poor father's favourite old horse was. Oh, if I could but break off this marriage! She is so beautiful and so good, that she would soon have other admirers, and would not, I hope, long grieve for this one, of whom I am sure Mrs. Bloxham knows more than she chooses to tell. I'll endeavour to find out what made her shake her head so gravely when she spoke of him, and when I know all, I'll tell my young lady everything I hear. Yes, even though she should be angry at my freedom, I was in hopes that there would be a lasting breach between them after the masked ball, for I saw she was greatly vexed and grieved that night and the whole of the day after; but where the love is, women so soon forgive and forget that in ten days all anger was over, and now they seem fonder than ever. Ah! well-a-day, and so it was with me long years ago."

Thus reasoned Nurse Murray, as, a prey to jealousy for the present, and dread of the future estrange-

ment of her young mistress, she sat alone in her chamber.

That day she went to visit Mrs. Bloxham, whose presence Durnford, the *valet de chambre* of Lord Alexander Beaulieu, had but half an hour previously quitted, he having gained from the gossiping *femme de chambre* a knowledge of all she knew of the affairs of Mrs. Sydney, her daughter, and Mr. Strathern, and, still more, of all she suspected; for Mrs. Bloxham had the habit of supplying any discrepancy in the information she sought to acquire by adding her suppositions of probabilities and possibilities, in which veracity was little regarded. But, much as she delighted in promulgating news, she had a still greater pleasure in receiving it; hence the society of Mr. Durnford was peculiarly acceptable to her, and his visits always left her in good humour with herself, and brimful of all the gossip known to the *coteries* of the *valetaille* of the English at Rome.

"This is very kind of you, my dear Mrs. Murray," said Mrs. Bloxham. "You so seldom come to see me, that it's quite a treat to have a visit from you. Pray sit down in this chair, it's more comfortable than the others. O, Mrs. Murray, this is very unlike the housekeeper's room I'd have to receive you in if we were in England; for not only in our town house in Belgrave Square, but at both my lord's places in the country, the housekeeper's rooms are quite pictures of comfort."

"I dare say they are, in course, Mrs. Bloxham; but in this outlandish, heathenish sort of place, what can one expect? I assure you, I have searched all over the town to try and hire an easy chair or a sofa for the horrid room I sit in, without being able to get one; and it was with the greatest difficulty I was able to procure a piece of carpet and a footstool for myself."

"Lords and ladies owe an immense debt of gratitude to hupper servants, who give up their Henglish comforts to travel with 'em in foreign parts, Mrs. Murray."

"Indeed, they do, Mrs. Bloxham."

"Will you take a bit of cake and a glass of wine, ma'am?"

"No, thank you; it is not long since I had my lunch."

"You really must not refuse me;" and Mrs. Bloxham opened an *armoire* in the chamber, and drew forth a bottle of wine and some cake. "You'll find this Madeira very good, Mrs. Murray; we got it for my lord's particular use, and his lordship's very difficult to be pleased in wine; and dear enough it is, too, and hard to be got, into the bargain."

Mrs. Bloxham filled two glasses to the brim, handed one to her visitor, and raising the other to her own lips, said, "Here's to your good health, Mrs. Murray."

"I drink to yours, ma'am," replied the latter, sipping the wine with great unction.

"And how are your ladies, ma'am?"

"Quite well, I thank you—and her ladyship?"

"Never better, I'm obleeged to you. When is Miss Sydney to be married?"

"Not till we get back to England."

"Ah, well! I say nothing; but if I was her, I know that I'd look twice before I'd give up my liberty, and with such a fine fortune, too, to one who has no title; for what's the good of money, Mrs. Murray, if it don't get a young lady a title?"

"Why, there may be something in that, Mrs. Bloxham; yet Mrs. Sydney, who had a large fortin, and was a great beauty in her day, married a gentleman as had no title, and many a lady envied her good luck for getting such a husband. Oh! *he* was such a gentleman as I never saw his like, before or since."

Mrs. Bloxham, aware that when once nurse Murray began on the subject of her deceased master there would be great difficulty in stopping her, and by no means disposed to waste time in listening to a catalogue of his virtues and a reiteration of his praises, interrupted her visitor by pouring out a second glass of wine, which, although refused, she insisted on being drank, and then, before the subject could be resumed, she observed—

"Yes, Mr. Strathern is not the husband *I* would.

were I in your place, wish to see married to Miss Sydney."

"And why not, Mrs. Bloxham, if I may make so bold as to ask the question?"

"I am a very particular person, Mrs. Murray, and very cautious about what I say;" an assertion, the truth of which Mrs. Bloxham's most intimate cronies would have been very much disposed to doubt; "but I know what I know."

"I suppose you do, ma'am; and that's just why I should like to be made acquainted with your meaning."

"Ah! Mrs. Murray, I wish I had not promised not to mention what I know; but I am tied down, or I would tell you every thing; and if you knew all, *you* would think as I do."

"Surely, between friends, and only you and I alone together, you might tell me, if not the whole, at least a part of what you know."

Here an ominous shake of the head, as full of meaning as that of Burleigh's, announced that Mrs. Bloxham was in possession of some mighty secret, which she did not seem disposed to communicate to her visitor.

"There's some people, Mrs. Murray, as is always ready to gossip and tell everything they know, but I was never one of them, and always have had a guard upon my lips, for I've thought to myself, 'least said is soonest mended.' No, I never was a fetcher or

carrier of news, nor a tale-bearer, nor a mischief-maker, not I; though, lawk, I *have* heard sich things, Mrs. Murray, as would make the hair on your head stand on end."

"Not about Mr. Strathern, I hope," said Mrs. Murray, combining the last remark with the subject that most interested her, and now seriously alarmed.

"Mayhap yes, and mayhap no. Gentlemen *will* be wild and extravagant, ma'am, and some more than others, and *will* get into debts and scrapes, and more's the pity; and *will* be keeping company with wicked women, and spending thousands on 'em; but I'll say nothing. O, Mrs. Murray, we live in a wicked world, that's what we do; and, for my part, if I was a beautiful young lady with a large fortin, I'd never marry any one but some very rich and grand lord, whose estates were all hintailed, for then I'd be sure of always having a fine house over my head, and a great title, for these two things are a great comfort when husbands—and they all do, ma'am, after a few months of marriage—take back to their old ways."

"Then, if I understand you right, Mrs. Bloxham, Mr. Strathern is one of those sad scapegraces, and yet who'd have thought it? So steady, and settled like as he appears."

"Lauk, Mrs. Murray! don't understand no such thing. I'd be very sorry to say so. I only men-

tioned that gentlemen sometimes are very wild, but I didn't name him more than any other, so don't mistake me."

"All I know, Mrs. Bloxham, is, that whatever you may have intended to say, the impression you left on my mind is, that you meant Mr. Strathern all the time you were speaking, and I'd take it much more kind of you if you were to come to the point at once than to be beating about the bush, blowing hot and cold with the same breath, as they say in my country."

"A word to the wise ought to be sufficient, Mrs. Murray. I'll say no more on that head, and I hope what I have told you in strict confidence will not be repeated, for, as I said before, I make it a point never to meddle or make in any one's business but my own, and no one ever could say that Fanny Bloxham was a gossip. If I was, I could tell *such things*, Mrs. Murray, as would surprise you, for I've lived in the best of families, with the grandest of lords and ladies, and have seen and heard of *such* doings—mercy on us!—as would take away your breath if I mentioned 'em. You've only had one place all your life, ma'am, as I've heard you say, and that with a couple who didn't live long enough together to be tired of each other, so all was smooth and quiet; but I've had several places, and always in the highest

families, and if I was only to tell you what the ladies' maids and valets have told me in the housekeepers' rooms, you'd bless yourself."

"But how could you be sure that one-half of what they said was true? I wouldn't believe a quarter of it; and then to think of the wickedness of servants speaking against their masters and mistresses!"

"Lord love you! how innocent you are! It's easy to see you have not lived in any of the tiptop fashionable families, or you'd know better."

"I'm glad I never did, for I could not abide such wickedness. I couldn't bring myself to eat the bread of those I couldn't respect. It would stick in my throat."

"So you fancy, but you'd soon get used to it, for bread is bread, come from where it will."

Finding that she could elicit nothing positive against Mr. Strathern from Mrs. Bloxham, Mrs. Murray took her departure, her friendship for that acquaintance considerably cooled by this interview, while Mrs. Bloxham's estimation of her was reduced to a very low ebb indeed.

"She's a mere nobody—a vulgar old twaddle, as Mr. Durnford called her, who knows nothing of high life," thought Mrs. Bloxham. "She wanted to pick my brains, but I saw through her at one glance, and let out nothing that could get me into a scrape; indeed, for the matter of that, I know nothing in per-

tikler of Mr. Strathern, for all Mr. Durnford said was that he was like all the rest of 'em 'ere wild young gentlemen, who's always in mischief; and, as the old saying is generally true that smooth water runs deep and the evil one is sure to be at the bottom, I dare say this young gentleman, who sets up to be so steady, is worse than the rest on 'em. I wonder what makes Mr. Durnford so anxious to know whether Mr. Strathern and Miss Sydney are as fond of each other as ever. He must have a reason for it, and I'll try to find it out when next I see him, that I will."

"Well, I'm no wiser than I was," thought Nurse Murray, as she walked home from her visit to Mrs. Bloxham, her ideas not a little confused by the insinuations and inuendoes of that gossiping woman, as well as by the two glasses of Madeira which she had been prevailed on to drink, and which, not being accustomed to indulge in such potent libations before dinner, had produced an unusual degree of excitement in her mind. "I feel all no how," thought she. "My head seems to go round and my face feels like fire. I hope I shan't see either of my ladies until I am more composed, and that the redness is gone out of my face, for what *would* they think of me? I wish I knew what to believe about Mr. Strathern. May be, all that Mrs. Bloxham told me was untrue. I never can believe that lords and ladies can be so bad as she said, and if she told lies about them, she might

also tell 'em about Mr. Strathern. Well, for my part, I don't know what to think; I hope all may turn out for the best, I am sure—and yet, if Mr. Strathern *should* be such a rake and spendthrift, it will make my poor dear young lady miserable, and break the heart of her poor mother, who has no other comfort in this life. Oh dear! how my head goes round, and my cheeks burn! I wish I hadn't been persuaded to drink that second glass. I declare, I feel all no how, and quite in a flutter."

When Nurse Murray attended to dress her young lady for dinner that day, the tumult in her mind, occasioned no less by the insinuation of Mrs. Bloxham than by her unusual indulgence in a very strong wine, had not subsided, and her altered appearance and evident emotion excited the suspicion and alarm of Miss Sydney, who, being really much attached to her old servant, took a great interest in her health. "What is the matter, my good Murray?" demanded her young mistress. "You look flushed and agitated. Are you ill, or has any thing occurred to vex you?"

"Oh! it's nothing, my dear young lady. I'm only a little heated, and have a headache;" and here Murray, overcome by the affectionate interest displayed by Miss Sydney, and by the thought of the ignorance under which she laboured relative to the real character of him into whose hands she was about to confide her destiny, burst into tears.

"I see, my poor Murray, that you are really ill. You must immediately go to bed, and I will have a physician sent for."

"No, indeed, Miss Sydney, there is no occasion; I shall be better by and by. I am quite able to dress you, indeed I am."

"You must not be obstinate, Murray; you really must go to bed, and Mrs. Collinson will dress me."

"'Tisn't illness, indeed it isn't—it's only anxiety," and here another flood of tears testified that Murray's malady was more of the mind than of the body.

"Anxiety, my poor Murray; and pray what about?" asked Miss Sydney, with undissembled astonishment.

"O, my dear young lady, I dare not tell you! You would be angry with your poor Murray if she told you the cause of her being in this state."

"Why should I be angry, Murray? You surely can have committed no crime, or been guilty of any action that needs concealment, or that could account for your present state of agitation."

"No, miss, God be thanked! *I* have committed no crime; but there are those whose consciences are not so clear, and that's what is breaking my heart;" and the sobs of the old woman impeded her utterance.

"But why should you conceal crime or guilt, Murray? On the contrary, it's your duty to reveal it."

"Ah! so I have said to myself twenty times to-day, miss; and yet I'm afraid to tell what I know—afraid, miss, that your mother, that you yourself mayhap, my dear young lady—you, for whom I would willingly lay down my life, would be angry with me."

"All this is quite incomprehensible to me, Murray. You say that there is crime somewhere—that you know it—and yet you assert your dread that its being revealed would incur the displeasure of my mother and me. What does—what *can* all this mystery mean? If it be anything my mother and I ought to know, let me hear it at once?" said Miss Sydney, in the full belief that the disclosure she wished to elicit related solely to one of the servants in the establishment.

"Well, my dear young lady, as you command me to tell it, I will; but if what I have to say should incur your anger, and I greatly fear it will, remember you commanded me to tell it. Oh, Miss Sydney, how can I help being miserable and almost heart-broken, when I know that you are going to be married to one who..."

"Hold, Murray," said the young lady, her face becoming flushed with displeasure; "presume not to attach such words as crime or guilt to Mr. Strathern. Think not that because I once, in a moment of weakness and excitement, listened to vague insinuations

against one whose name ought to be sacred with those who love me, I will ever again permit it. I am sorry, Murray, that you should force me to censure you for indulging in a propensity to gossip, and I must positively interdict even the least reference to this painful subject again."

The dignity of Miss Sydney's bearing, and the sternness with which she uttered the rebuke, so unlike the softness and kindness of manner to which she had been accustomed in her young mistress, produced so strong an effect on the old nurse's feelings, that, quite overcome, she wept bitterly in uncontrollable emotion, and, though much displeased, Miss Sydney, touched by the violence of her grief, had pity on her.

"Indeed, it was because I—I love you—better than everything on ea—rth," sobbed Murray; "bet—ter than life itself; that I thought it—it my duty to wa—r—n you,—and now—I have incur—red your anger. Oh! my poor old heart—will—break!"

Miss Sydney poured out a glass of water, and persuaded the old woman to swallow it, but her sobs still continued, proving the depth of her emotion at the unwonted reproof of her young mistress.

"Oh! I see you are deeply offended with me, Miss Sydney; and yet Heaven knows that, could you but read my heart, you would be convinced that it was no idle curiosity, but a real affection for you, that

led me to inquire into what Mrs. Bloxham knew against Mr. Strathern. Forgive me, if I have done wrong. Do, my own dear lady, and be assured it was well meant."

"I pardon you this time, Murray, but on one condition, and that is, that you will never more make Mr. Strathern the subject of your conversation with Mrs. Bloxham, or any one else, and that you refer to the suspicions infused into your mind by the absurd insinuations of that person no more. Were my mother to know that you had ever done so, she would be so seriously offended that I do not think she would forgive you so readily as I have done; but I do so the more willingly because I am conscious that my weakness in listening to you on this subject on a former occasion encouraged you to persevere in it. Dry your eyes and compose yourself. I am quite convinced you meant well in all this business; but you must remember, my good Murray, that no motive, however good, will justify your prying into the affairs, or questioning the reputation of others, or encouraging mischievous gossip about them."

Murray was silent, but not convinced by the reproof or reflections of her young lady. She loved her so fondly, so devotedly, that she could not bring herself to think that there was any impropriety in her endeavouring to ascertain the meaning of the hints and ominous shakes of the head of Mrs. Bloxham,

when they referred to so important a point as the character of him on whom the future happiness of the person dearest to her on earth was to depend. But, though unconvinced on this head, she saw that her young mistress's good will could only be retained by a strict adherence to the conditions laid down by her, and consequently she determined not to violate them. "Oh!" and the nurse heaved a deep sigh as she uttered the exclamation, "how much in love must my poor dear young lady be, when she won't listen to a word against Mr. Strathern! Woe's me! I wish she had never set eyes on him, for he surely has bewitched her."

Although Louisa Sydney had acted with such firmness and propriety on this occasion as to impress her old attendant with a very exalted opinion, if not of her strength of mind or dignity, at least of her full and entire confidence in her lover, truth compels us to declare that, while reproving the nurse, she felt the most longing desire to be made acquainted with all that she had learned from the gossiping Mrs. Bloxham. The tears and agitation of Murray indicated that the information she had received must have been, indeed, of a most painful and disagreeable nature, and this thought filled the breast of Miss Sydney with a thousand vague yet disquieting suspicions, which she longed to have refuted, or to combat, by her own reasoning powers, against the pre-

judices and credulity of the old nurse. A feeling of what was due to her lover had induced her to be thus peremptory in checking the disclosures Murray was on the point of making; but this sacrifice had been made at the expense of her own feelings, for the pangs of jealousy awakened in her heart made her experience the most longing desire to learn whether indeed she had any just cause for their existence. That Strathern loved her, and her only at present, she was little disposed to doubt, for his every word and look bore this blessed conviction to her mind; but, like many others of the youthful and inexperienced of her sex whose affections have been awakened for the first time, this certitude of the present devotion of her lover was not sufficient to satisfy the fastidious and *exigeante* Louisa Sydney, who was painfully alive to a jealousy of the past. All suspicions of Strathern's being influenced by mercenary motives in seeking her hand had vanished from her mind. There was an elevation and nobleness in his sentiments which every day's acquaintance revealed, that precluded her from doubting him on this point; but still the fear that he had previously loved, and loved unworthily, once infused into her breast, haunted her continually, and poisoned the happiness which, without this alloy to it, would have been indeed as perfect as was ever allowed to one of earth's daughters.

CHAPTER XXVI.

What sacrifices have been made for gold
By sage and moralist have oft been told,
When blooming youth, with step that scarce doth falter,
To mate with hoary age will seek the altar,
And offer up, O Hymen, at thy shrine
False vows, forgetful of the wrath divine!
See wit with folly, erudition rare,
With ignorance consent for wealth to pair,
And noble blood descend for this to wive
The coarsest, plainest, vulgar shrew alive:
All this—nay, more—can gold make mortals do,
Reckless the heavy ills that may ensue.

We left Lord Alexander Beaulieu going to pay his first visit, since his assumed indisposition, to Mrs. Maclaurin, who received him with every demonstration of the delight which she *naïvely* assured him his presence afforded her, demonstrations which, though flattering to his vanity, rather disgusted than gratified him. Lord Alexander Beaulieu, like many of his

order, possessed a fastidiousness of taste, joined to a laxity of moral principle, that accorded very ill together, for while the first rendered aught approaching to coarseness or vulgarity odious to him, the second continually exposed him to both, in the associates it threw in his way. He recoiled with ill-concealed distaste from the exuberant proofs of pleasure which his visit occasioned Mrs. Maclaurin, while she, wholly destitute of tact, observed not his coldness.

"Oh! then, isn't it myself that's glad to see you! Sure I thought you'd never leave your room, the time appeared so long to me. And to be so near to you, too, without being able to see you, made me quite angry. Indeed, I often said to myself how unlucky it was we were not married before you got ill, for then I could be with you, and that would be a great comfort to you, wouldn't it?"

Lord Alexander Beaulieu almost groaned at the notion, but smiled blandly as he said, "Certainly that would have rendered my confinement to a sick chamber much less irksome."

"Indeed, and you arn't half as much changed as I expected, my lord. You look mighty well. I dare say you see a great alteration in me, for I have fretted so much at your illness that I couldn't eat, drink, or sleep—" an assertion which, as far as regarded the two first parts of it, Mrs. Bernard could have contradicted; and to the want of veracity of the third

Mademoiselle Justine could have borne ample testimony, as she had told Durnford that the loud and continued snoring of her mistress, to whose bedchamber hers was adjacent, awoke her several times in the night.

"Yes, had we been married, my charming friend, I could have better borne my late seclusion," said Lord Alexander: "and I hope that, lest another attack should occur, you will abridge the tedious period of my probation, and allow me to call you mine?"

Lord Alexander tried to look tender, and to throw as much *empressement* as possible into his manner, but any one less obtuse than Mrs. Maclaurin could not have failed to discover how much the effort cost him, and how ill he performed the *rôle* of a lover.

"Ah! now, my lord, don't be too hard on me. I leave it to your own honour whether it would be right or decent for me to marry you when we have only been so short a time acquainted. What would people say?"

"Why should we care for what they may say, my sweet friend? I love you, and you do me the honour of saying you do not hate me."

"Hate you! Quite the contrary; I never liked any man half so well before," and the lady endeavoured to call up a blush, and look modest, in both which attempts truth compels us to acknowledge she was very unsuccessful.

"Well, then, dearest of women, if you really like me, why should you retard my happiness? Why not" —and he took her coarse red hand in his with an involuntary shudder as he felt its size and texture— "be generous, and superior to idle ceremony in at once yielding me this dear hand."

"Oh! your lordship knows your power over my poor weak heart, and that I haven't the courage to refuse you anything," and she hid her face in her handkerchief.

"Then you will be mine, my lovely creature, without any more cruel delays. You will at once let me lead you to the hymeneal altar."

"Where is that, my lord? Somewhere at Rome, I suppose, and yet it can't be, neither, for my dam de company told me yesterday, when I was questioning her, that a Protestant could not be married at Rome."

Tempted as Lord Alexander Beaulieu was to laugh at this *naïve* proof of the gross ignorance of his *fiancée*, he nevertheless restrained his risible muscles, and said, "It is true we cannot be wedded here, but we can go on to Naples, and there, at the English minister's, we can be united."

"But wouldn't it be better to be married openly at church, my lord? I should prefer it."

"In Italy this would be impracticable, my fair friend, unless we were both of the Roman Catholic persuasion."

"Oh! if that's the case, I'll do as your lordship wishes; but I hope you'll take care to send the news of the wedding to all the English newspapers. How mad it will make some of my acquaintances to find that, after all, I have married a lord! Oh, dear! how delightful it is to think how angry and envious they will be!"

"Had we not better make our arrangements to proceed to Naples with as little delay as possible, there to have the nuptial ceremony performed?"

"Lauk! if your lordship doesn't make me feel quite ashamed," and Mrs. Maclaurin held down her head, and now really blushed.

"Charming modesty!" exclaimed Lord Alexander Beaulieu.

"Oh, my lord! poor dear Mr. Maclaurin was quite a different sort of person from your lordship. *He* never talked of *nup shall* nor of *nup will*, poor man, nor ever made me blush in his life. *He* was just for all the world as if he was my father in regard to that, though he left me his great fortin."

"He was a happy man to have had so charming a wife."

"Well, now, would you believe it, I don't think he ever so much as looked in my face. All he required was for me to sing to him every evening till he fell asleep, so you see I gave him *raisins* for leaving me nearly two *plums*. Now isn't that a good joke of

mine? Ha, ha, ha! I used to say to him, 'You and I, sir, exchange notes. I give you *my* notes for your bank ones;' but he never laughed a bit at my jokes, not he, and that used to affront me sometimes."

"I see that you unite wit with all your other attractions, my lovely widow. How I long to call you Lady Alexander Beaulieu!"

"And, indeed, lauk knows I long to hear myself called so. 'Lady Alexander!' it sounds quite like Alexander the Great."

"I wish I could give you a higher title, my charmer."

"Oh! sure this is quite good enough, my lord; and in return I'll show your lordship that I won't be behind you in generosity, for I'll give you half my fortin, ay, settle it on your lordship when we go back to England."

"Lovely creature, who could bestow a thought on money when you are in question?"

"Indeed, and if I had twice as much, I'd give you the half, share and share alike."

"Your delicacy of sentiment overpowers me," said Lord Alexander Beaulieu, and, rising from his chair, he encircled Mrs. Maclaurin's clumsy waist with his arms, and, not without a struggle on her part, imprinted a kiss on her cheek.

"I wrote home the day you first spoke about mar-

riage to me, to have an exact statement of my fortin sent out to me, to show your lordship."

"It is yourself, and not your fortune, I seek, my charming creature, and if I have ever bestowed a thought on it, it was because, being only a younger brother, and like all *cadets de famille*, not over-rich, I have not the means of supporting you in that style of splendour and elegance to which your personal and mental qualities entitle you. I can only give you rank, and a distinguished place in society."

"And sure what more do I want? Haven't I got plenty of money for both of us? But I hope you won't be obliged to go to Hindia. I suffer terribly from say-sickness, and thought I'd die when I was crossing over from Dublin to Holyhead, so you may judge what it would be if you were to take me to Hindia, and I surely wouldn't let you go there without me."

"I have not the slightest intention of going to India. Such an idea never entered my head."

"But how can you help it when you are a cadet? I knew a gentleman, a friend of Colonel Fairfax, who was a cadet, and he was obliged to go to Hindia; and as you told me you were a cadet, I supposed you'd be also compelled to go there."

Lord Alexander Beaulieu now recollected having used the term *cadet de famille*, which led to Mrs. Ma-

claurin's mistake, and he could not repress a smile at her ignorance of the signification of so common an expression, while he explained to her what it meant.

"Well, I wish I knew French; but I hope I soon will, for my maid is a French woman, and I'll get her to teach me. Justin—that is her name, though I often tell her she is *just out*, when she doesn't understand what I say to her—is a mighty clever genteel girl, and dresses me very elegantly, doesn't she?"

"I admire you so excessively, that I never look at your dress," was the reply of the artful Lord Alexander; and this flattery was repaid by a most tender glance from the languishing widow.

"Do you know any of the nobility at Naples?" demanded she, after a few minutes' pause.

"I dare say I shall find some of my acquaintances there."

"The reason I asked was, that I'd like to be married just as all the great ladies in London are, with titled ladies for my bridesmaids, all dressed elegantly, with white and silver favours; and I intend to wear a dress of Brussels point-lace over white satin, and a veil of the same, and a wreath of orange flowers—won't it be beautiful? Justin has been trying to persuade me that widows ought not to wear orange flowers when they remarry, but I told her that when a woman marries an old man who might be her grandfather, such a marriage may go for just nothing at all, and when he

dies and she marries a young man she may well wear orange flowers."

"Marriages celebrated out of England are never attended by the ceremonies and splendour that accompany them there. Persons about to be united go to the English ambassador's or minister's house, with a few friends, and in simple morning costumes, where the ceremony is performed."

"What! are there no bridesmaids, no elegant wedding favours, no splendid breakfast after, just as one reads of in the *Morning Post*, under the head of 'Marriage in High Life?'"

"No, my charming friend, there is nothing of all this."

"Oh! that is a pity. Why, it's just like not being married at all;" and Mrs. Maclaurin's countenance betrayed her disappointment.

"It is only in England that I can secure for you, my angel, the advantages to which your rank, as my wife, will entitle you. While we remain on the Continent, you must be content, like all the rest of the English nobility, to lay by the appendages of aristocracy."

Mrs. Maclaurin was silent for a few minutes, her mind evidently revolving some serious question; and, as Lord Alexander Beaulieu contemplated her plain and vulgar face, and her clumsy, ungraceful, and overdressed person, he almost wondered how he had

been so far able to conquer the disgust which both were so well calculated to excite as to touch her cheeks with his lips. Seldom had the demon of avarice achieved a greater conquest over a needy man of fashion than on this occasion, and his victim was ready to acknowledge it as he turned with a sense of loathing from his future wife.

"I have been thinking, my lord," said that lady, "that it would be as well to postpone our marriage until we return to London, and we can go back as soon as we like. I have seen quite enough of foreign parts, and wouldn't object to leave Italy to-morrow, for the matter of that."

Lord Alexander Beaulieu was somewhat startled by this unexpected proposal, and by no means disposed to acquiesce in it. He had many good reasons, in the shape of sundry long bills, "more honoured in the breach than in the observance," for not wishing to show himself in London until his marriage had secured to him the power of making an arrangement with his creditors, and, however closely that event might follow his arrival there, he had a presentiment that it would be unsafe for him to appear there before it. He felt that it would be unwise to let his future wife into this secret, yet something must be said to avert her carrying into execution the measure she had projected. Skilled in every wily art, he quickly formed his plan, and as rapidly commenced putting it

into practice. He called up a look in which wounded pride and disappointed affection strove for mastery, and said, "Is it possible, madam, that you can thus trifle with my feelings? that you can coldly propose to postpone the happiness for which I pant? Have I been deceived, and, while I believed you as anxious as myself for our union, can you indeed propose to defer it?"

"Sure it's only for so short a time. It wouldn't make the difference of more than three weeks or a month."

"Three weeks or a month!—cruel woman! But I see you do not love me? if you did, you would not, you *could* not, think of prolonging my misery. What but my anxiety to call you mine has produced my late illness? and yet you . . . ."

"Oh, bless me, my lord, don't, pray don't take on so. Sure, if I thought 'twould have hurt you so much, I wouldn't, for any consideration, have said a word about the matter; but, the truth is, that when I found that weddings in Italy are so mean like, and not at all elegant as they are in London, I just thought that we might as well put off ours until we got back; but, rather than you should be displeased, I will make up my mind to be married at Naples."

"You are so cold, so indifferent, so wholly unlike what I expected to find you on this occasion," said Lord Alexander Beaulieu, "that I hardly know whe-

ther I ought to accept your hand," and he looked grave and offended.

"Sure, you wouldn't be after refusing me, would you?" and the clumsy creature sidled up to her *soi-disant enamorato*, and, trying to look archly in his face, took his hand, and held it between her coarse red ones.

"If I thought that you didn't love me as I desire to be loved, fondly as I am attached to you, I would resign this"—fair, he tried to say; but he could not, as his eye fell on it, bring out the word, so he finished the sentence, by adding, "hand."

"But why should you doubt it? Do you think, if you were ten times a lord—ay, by my troth, and Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, who is always the greatest of lords, into the bargain—I'd marry you if I didn't like and love you better than all mankind! Not I, troth, I can tell you. What's the use of having a great fortin if one can't please oneself in a husband, I should like to know?—and so I often told them that used to come a courting to me at Brighton and other places."

Lord Alexander Beaulieu found it difficult to conceal his disgust while his future bride was making this speech, which she rendered still more emphatic by her gestures, which, always vulgar and ungraceful, became doubly so when she was animated and earnest.

"I see you're jealous, my lord, at my mentioning

about them smart dandies that used to be trying to please me in England; but, faith, you needn't, for I didn't care a straw for any of 'em. Come, don't look gloomy. I'm ready and willing to marry you when and where you like; and you may take it as a sure proof of my affection, when I consent to be married in a country where there's no bridesmaids, nor elegant dresses worn at weddings—where, in fact, it's almost like not being married at all."

Lord Alexander Beaulieu took her hand, and said, "I am, I must be satisfied, my lovely friend; for to doubt your attachment would make me wretched. Let us then arrange to proceed to Naples next week, where this fair hand shall become mine, and then I shall have no wish ungratified."

"I have been thinking, that now we're to be married so soon, and that you'll always be with me, I won't have any occasion for my dam de company, and, therefore, I'll send her off at once, and not be bothered taking her with me to Naples. By sending her away, you and I can travel together very comfortably there."

"My dear creature, that must not be. My travelling with you alone before we are wedded would give rise to a thousand malicious reports, which could not fail to be injurious to your future position as Lady Alexander Beaulieu. It would look ill for you to travel without a female companion, or to be unaccom-

panied by one when we go to the English minister's to have the marriage ceremony performed. Let Mrs. Bernard, therefore, remain with you, at least until we are wedded, and then you can dismiss her if you please."

"Is Naples a sayport?" demanded Mrs. Maclaurin, not the least abashed at thus displaying her total ignorance of geography.

"Yes, it is."

"Then I'll ship her off in the first vessel that sails for England, that's what I'll do, and that will save a deal of money, for though I have plenty, I don't see the good of throwing it away."

This fresh proof of her hardness of heart and utter selfishness disgusted her future husband as much as if *he* were wholly exempt from these odious failings, so prone are men to forget their own defects when censuring those of others.

"Oh! how stupid it is of me to have forgotten," said Mrs. Maclaurin, and she opened a silver casket on her table, and drew from it a small *écrin*. "Look here what I have got for you!" and she held up three large diamond studs. "Aren't they elegant? They'll look beautiful in your *chimey*. And here is a pin, just the same, to wear when you have a black cravat."

"I am quite shocked that you should have taken this trouble; they are very beautiful, but I never wear trinkets, as you may observe."

"Yes, I noticed that, but I naturally thought it was because you were a younger son; and as you told me younger sons were seldom rich, I fancied that, perhaps, you could not afford to buy handsome studs or pins, for I can't think that any who could have them would go without."

Lord Alexander Beaulieu's cheek crimsoned as he listened to the *parvenue's* remarks, but he only noticed them by saying, that very few of the persons most distinguished for good taste in the circle in which he moved were in the habit of wearing expensive ornaments.

"How very odd! Well, for my part, I'm of the old opinion, that fine feathers make fine birds, and lords and ladies look no grander than other people, unless they wear fine things. If I was the Queen, I'd always wear my crown on my head, except when I wanted to put on my night-cap, and lords and ladies ought, I think, always to put on their coronets when they take off their hats and bonnets. But you'll not offend me by refusing to take these diamonds? Do accept and wear 'em for my sake. They are three very fine ones that I bought in London to wear as studs in my habit-shirt, and I gave two hundred guineas ready money, for I always pay ready money, for them."

"I really cannot think of depriving you of them," said Lord Alexander Beaulieu, with an air of *hauteur*.

"You do not deprive me at all, for I really seldom wear 'em; and, besides, if I did, sure won't we be soon married, and then 'twill be just the same as if they were mine still, for I can wear 'em when I like."

"Well, then, when we are married I will accept them, my sweet friend, but not before;" and Lord Alexander, with a feeling more akin to noble blood than might, after his recent conduct, be suspected to rest in his sullied breast, placed the presents designed for him on the table, with so stately an air that even the obtuse and vulgar Mrs. Maclaurin was ready to acknowledge in her secret thoughts that there was something different in real lords, as she loved to term them, and the men she had hitherto been accustomed to associate with, though she could not precisely comprehend in what the difference consisted.

"Now, there's them smart dandies that used to visit me in London and Brighton," thought she to herself, "and who used to be so elegantly dressed, how *they'd* have jumped with joy to receive such gifts! and yet his lordship positively seemed more disposed to be offended than pleased when I offered them to him. May be he thought they were not large enough or grand enough. Oh! these lords are so high and proud. Sometimes when I am talking quite pleasantly to him, Lord Alexander will draw himself up so very stately, just as he did when I said that I thought he did not wear diamond buttons, because, as a younger

brother, he might not be able to afford it. I must mind my P's and Q's with him when we are married, or he'll be for taking offence when I do not dream of giving any."

"I must now leave you," said Lord Alexander Beaulieu, rising to depart.

"Sure, now that you are so much better, you will dine with me, won't you?" and Mrs. Maclaurin laid her large red hand on his arm, and looked up entreatingly in his face.

"I am not yet quite well enough to be able to sit up all the evening."

"Sure, can't you lay down on the sofa after dinner without ceremony, just as you would in your own room?"

"I could not think of making such a solecism in good breeding in the presence of a lady, so you must really excuse me."

"Well, I must say, I think it is not very kind of you to refuse dining with me, now that everything is settled for our marriage," and Mrs. Maclaurin's countenance, never a very agreeable one, assumed an expression of extreme ill-humour, as she uttered what she meant as a reproof. "It's easy to see, after all you have said to the contrary, that you do not take as much pleasure in my company as you ought, considering we are in our courting days, and if that's the case, maybe 'twould be as well not to marry at all,

for what do people marry for but to be always together, for better for worse, as the parson says."

Her face grew so red, and her eyes glanced forth such flashes of anger, that her *soi-disant* lover saw that he had better not provoke her into greater ire by persisting in a refusal to comply with her wishes.

"Can you for a moment doubt, my dear creature," said he, "how much happier I must always feel near you than anywhere else in the world? and if I hesitated to accept your invitation at once, it was because I feared to bore you in my present weak state, when my spirits are hardly equal to the excitement of your charming society."

"Well, then, you'll come, won't you? There's a good man." And she held out her hand in token of restored amity.

"I can deny no wish of yours, my charming friend; so if you find me a very dull and tiresome companion, you must not blame me, but yourself, for having drawn on you such an infliction. I will now take my leave, and return to dine with you. Adieu, *au revoir*.

"Ajew, my dear lord, ajew." And her countenance brightening up at having carried her point with her future husband, she smiled most graciously on him.

When the door closed, the words "Hateful, odious Gorgon!" were muttered between the half-shut teeth of Lord Alexander Beaulieu, as he proceeded to his own apartment; while Mrs. Maclaurin, having looked

for a few minutes in the glass, and arranged her hair, exclaimed, "Well, I don't know how it is, but somehow or other it often crosses my mind, that he doesn't really love me after all, he is so cool, and different to other men when they are going to be married, but I suppose this is the way that lords always behave."

CHAPTER XXVII.

He who of servants tools will make,
Will find that liberties they'll take;
And, howsoever bad they be,
Will, with contempt, *his* baseness see,
And scorn him for the treach'rous art
With which he tries to act a part;
While they, more dexterous in deceit,
Deride him whom uncheck'd they cheat.

Never did man enter his chamber in a worse humour than did Lord Alexander Beaulieu on leaving that of Mrs. Maclaurin. Every interview with her increased his dislike, and the *exigeance* she had exhibited in exacting his presence that day, so far from flattering his vanity as a proof of her attachment, only served to add to his disgust towards her, as he viewed it as an earnest of what he might expect at her hands when he was married. He threw himself into a *bergère*, and cursed the poverty which compelled

him to seek so hateful and humiliating an alliance, and execrated her by whose means he was to obtain that wealth which he had so long and ardently desired. "Oh! the misery of being compelled to conceal dislike," thought Lord Alexander, "and to enact the lover while the heart loathes the object to whom this court is made!"

This new proof of the *exigeance* and despotism of Mrs. Maclaurin, so lately revealed, while it increased his disgust to her, gave him little alarm for the future, he being fully determined to carry everything his own way, and to let her soon see that he would be master, *coute qui coute*, of his own actions. Nevertheless, the thought of the opposition he should meet with to accomplish his point, and the vulgar turbulence to be encountered in a contest with this ill-brought-up and coarse-minded woman, would intrude to vex and sour him, and he writhed under the infliction he was about to entail on himself, without either desiring to abandon the alliance he had sought, or to contemn the baseness that instigated him in the pursuit. No; wealth was the sole, the sovereign good he sighed for, and to attain it, he would stifle every reproach, vanquish every repugnance.

"Ye Gods!" exclaimed he, "what will Mount Serrat—the proud, fastidious Mount Serrat—say to me when I present to him his new sister-in-law? I fancy I see his face of horror and amazement when

he hears her Hibernian brogue and extraordinary dialect. He may, however, blame himself; for had this same brother of mine paid my debts the last time, I should not have been driven from London, and there I might have made a more creditable marriage."

Lord Alexander Beaulieu was forgetful that his brother had already twice paid his debts, amounting to a very large sum each time; but so it ever is with the improvident spendthrift, who soon becomes unmindful of past acts of generosity and kindness, however munificent they may have been, if a continuance of them is withheld, and ingratitude is with him the sure follower of benefits received. "Well, I shall soon be wholly independent of Mount Serrat, and that will be a great comfort," thought Lord Alexander Beaulieu. "I need no more be bored with his grave lectures and advice, and, Heaven knows, he is by no means sparing of either! Were he but half so liberal with his money, I should not now be on the point of marriage with this odious Irishwoman."

The entrance of Durnford interrupted the meditations of his master. "Have you heard any news?" demanded he.

"Yes, my lord, and a pretty deal of trouble and expense into the bargain it has cost me—the trouble at least to me—and the expense to your lordship."

"I don't comprehend you."

"O, my lord! you don't know what these ladies'-

maids and housekeepers are. There's no getting a word of intelligence out of them without flattery and presents. Why—would you believe it, my lord?—I had to treat Mrs. Bloxham with six bottles of Madeira—and a pretty price they ask for it at Rome, too—before she'd say a word, ay, and a plum cake from the English confectioner's, and very dear *he* is in his charges, I must say."

Durnford, a clever fellow in his way, by no means burthened with honesty, or scrupulousness in point of veracity, missed no opportunity of profiting by his master's folly or schemes. He insisted on receiving a per centage of twenty-five per cent. for every article furnished for Lord Alexander Beaulieu's use, and consequently took care always to order double what that nobleman required. When employed to discover intelligence from the servants of others, as in the case of Mrs. Bloxham, although he found that class invariably disposed to freely communicate to him all that they knew, or suspected, he made his master believe that it was only by bribes judiciously applied that he could extract news from them; hence the entries in his account-book of sundry presents in the shapes of half-dozens of wine, gold rings, French shawls, never bestowed, drew considerable sums from the purse of Lord Alexander, who could but ill afford the imposition practised on him. To prepare his

master for these same entries, he would with a long face deplore the extravagant charges of the tradespeople at whose shops he alleged the bribes were purchased, well aware that the truth was little likely to reach the ears of his employer.

"Well, what did Mrs. Bloxham tell you?" demanded Lord Alexander.

"Why, my lord, she told me as how Miss Sydney and Mr. Strathern were better friends than ever; that Mr. Strathern is never out of Mrs. Sydney's house, and that they are all as happy as possible."

This was too much for Lord Alexander Beaulieu to hear unmoved, and more particularly when his nerves were all ajar, as they always were after a visit to Mrs. Maclaurin. "Psha!" exclaimed he, "and is this all the intelligence you obtained? I think it was hardly worth while to bribe Mrs. Bloxham so highly. One bottle of madeira, instead of six, might have sufficed."

"Your lordship hasn't a notion of the difficulty of managing these sort of women. If I were to offer her a single bottle of wine, she would be so affronted that probably I should never again be admitted into the house. I told her that Mr. Strathern was a sad rake, and would be sure to make Miss Sydney a miserable woman, every word of which she will be sure to repeat to Mrs. Murray when they next meet, and the old

nurse, who is allowed to talk to Miss Sydney more as a friend than a servant, will be sure to tell it to her young mistress."

"I hope that may produce some effect, but I almost doubt it."

"I have also seen Ma'mselle Justine, who has always a thousand questions to ask about your lordship. She is as sharp as a needle, finds out everything by hook or by crook, and is not at all shy in asking for presents. When I try to get out of giving them, she says, 'Oh! I suppose your master is an *avare*;' and then she adds, that she will never let *her* mistress marry one who is not generous. The courier tells me that Mrs. Maclaurin is entirely governed by Ma'mselle Justine, who can make her do just what she pleases; so, in regard of your lordship's interest, I'm obliged to keep good friends with her, and this can only be done by giving her cake and wine and cherry brandy when she comes here. This costs a mint of money, and it goes to my heart to see your lordship put to such expense....."

"Which you might have saved if you had followed my advice, and paid your addresses to her—in fact, bribed her with flattery, instead of wine and cakes."

"Really, my lord, I *have* a principle; and I couldn't bear to marry a woman who hadn't one also, and who hadn't the fear of God before her eyes;" and Durnford looked grave and sanctimonious.

"Well, I must marry soon, Durnford, or I shall be ruined by your system of bribery—that's clear, for your book swallows up more of my money than my own *menu plaisirs* do."

"Why, as to treating Ma'mselle Justine, it really is money well laid out, my lord, for, as she governs her mistress, and, as she tells me, can make her believe that black is white, and *vice versâ*, she might make her break off the marriage, if she took it into her head. And she might do so if she thought your lordship wasn't as generous as a prince, as I always tell her you are. She has the finest place, she admits, of any lady's-maid in all Rome, higher wages, greater presents and perquisites, and a fine per centage on everything her mistress buys, so it's no wonder she doesn't much like the thought of Mrs. Maclaurin's marrying, unless she was sure that your lordship wouldn't spoil her profits; so 'tis to prevent her thinking there is any chance of this that I put your lordship to such a heavy expense for her."

"You may leave me now, Durnford, and come back in time for me to dress for dinner, as I dine at Mrs. Maclaurin's."

"It's a pity your lordship didn't let me know in time, that I might have countermanded your dinner. I can't bear to see your lordship's money thrown away," and off walked Durnford, determined to devour the said dinner himself, and so save his board

wages. There were moments when Lord Alexander Beaulieu felt conscious of the mean and base part he was enacting, and almost blushed before his own servant. It is true, this consciousness, humiliating and painful as it was, produced no change in his conduct, for it amounted not to remorse for the past, and led to no desire for amendment in the future. Its effects were a sourness of temper, and irritability of nerves, that rendered him far from agreeable to others, while he was under its influence, and a burden to himself. In such a humour was he when he dismissed Durnford; and as he ensconced his person in the *bergère*, into which he had thrown himself on entering the room, he felt disposed to quarrel with all the world, and never stood lower in his own estimation.

"I am a cup too low," thought he, "and shall never be able to get through the evening with that most odious of all women without a glass of *curaçoa* to put me in spirits."

He rang the bell, and desired Durnford to bring the liqueur.

"There's none in the *armoir*, my lord; I gave the very last glass to Ma'mselle Justine yesterday."

"I wish Ma'mselle Justine was"—at the devil he was about to say, but remembering the old proverb that "walls have ears," and by no means disposed that Ma'mselle Justine should suspect that he disliked her, he checked the sentence, and added—"was less

partial to *curaçoa*. Go and get me some, and, in future, do not touch mine for any one else."

Durnford went off to procure the liqueur, smiling at the credulity of his master, and the facility he found in deceiving him, while Ma'mselle Justine got the credit of having drank that which she had not even tasted, as Durnford's tale of having made her the presents which he entered in his master's book was as false as his statements relative to similar gifts made to Mrs. Bloxham.

"I must soon dismiss this artful Frenchwoman," thought Lord Alexander Beaulieu, "for while she remains with her foolish mistress, all attempts to curb her extravagance will be vain. What a woman! what a woman! Such is the disgust with which she inspires me, that even now, were I not reduced to my last hundred, and know not where to find another, I would break off this odious marriage."

The entrance of Durnford with the *curaçoa* interrupted the trite reflections of the master. He swallowed two bumpers of it, and then, somewhat exhilarated by its effects, resumed his meditations.

"And so, after all," thought Lord Alexander Beaulieu, "the trouble I have taken, and at some risk to myself too, to cause an irreparable breach between Strathern and that girl, and making myself a prisoner for so many days, I find that my schemes are defeated, and that they are as loving as two turtle-

doves, billing and cooing together. Curse them! curse them!" and his brow became clouded, and his countenance assumed a fiend-like expression, as he uttered his imprecations. "How I hate and loathe them both! And to think that, while I am wretched and self-abased, dragging out the tedious hours in painful reflections, or — worse still, infinitely worse— in the society of the abominable Gorgon I am about to marry, they are happy in the enjoyment of each other's society and in a good understanding, which all my schemes and efforts have been unable to interrupt. I thought I knew that girl better. Her pride and disposition towards suspicion I had often noted. Who then could have foreseen that she would have been proof against the plan I devised for turning her against Strathern? And on him, too, my letter has produced no effect. I could better support the annoyances of my own position had I the consolation of knowing that they were unhappy, but to hear that they are fonder than ever, and perfectly well united, maddens me.

"Well, well, there is no use in thinking of all this, and yet I cannot drive it from my mind. It haunts me continually, and so sours and irritates my temper, that I find it a difficult task to restrain its ebullitions when provoked by the folly of that stupid and ignorant creature I am about to wed. Had I not lost at play three hundred of the five I won by my wager

with Fitzwarren, I might have temporized a few weeks longer before I tied the irrevocable knot that will bind me for ever to that quintessence of vulgarity. What a madman I was to play when my means were so cramped! — but I was urged on by the hope of winning a sufficient sum to keep me afloat for some time, and here again my evil destiny pursued me. Had that good-natured blockhead, Fitzwarren, remained here, I might count on his assistance for the loan of a few hundreds, but he—Devil take him!—has chosen to set off, and I don't know a single man at Rome to whom I should like to apply in an emergency, or from whom, if I did, I should have much chance of receiving assistance. Nothing, then, remains but to marry this odious woman, and that as soon as it can be accomplished. I must swallow this bitter pill as children do physic, by shutting my eyes and gulping it down, and think only of the pleasures her wealth can enable me to plunge into as a consolation for such a *mésalliance*."

Such were the reflections that passed through the mind of Lord Alexander Beaulieu as he reclined in an easy chair, until Durnford came to inform him that it was time to dress for dinner, and never did he perform the duties of the toilette with so little interest in their result.

"Bah!" thought he, as he looked at his mirror, "what avails it to look well? A lord, in any dress,

would be sure to be acceptable to that *parvenue*, who is a respecter, not of persons, but of titles. And well it is that we younger brothers, who seldom have anything else to hold out as baits to catch riches, have this one. Without it, how many poor devils, like myself, would be now on the *pavé*, instead of having found wives, if not of great merit, at least of great price, which is the essential in the matrimonial market!"

"I think my master's purse is getting rather seedy," thought Durnford, when Lord Alexander Beaulieu withdrew to keep his dinner engagement with Mrs. Maclaurin. "He has not been in high spirits of late; a sure sign that his finances are low, as I have often remarked. Well, a good portion of his late supplies has found its way into my coffers, where it shall be safely kept, instead of being squandered all over Rome, as it would have been by him, had I not laid an embargo on it. They call my lord a sharp and clever fellow—ha! ha! ha! the notion of it makes me laugh. Why, I can cheat him as easy as if he were a child, and without his ever so much as suspecting it either; and yet I am no sharper nor cleverer than many other valets, and not so much so as some, who, in my place, wouldn't leave him a guinea. But all the haristocracy are so. *They* know nothing of life; are not up to anything, with all their hedication; and a poor servant, who has merely picked up enough

of learning to scribble down false entries in his book and tot up the amount, can impose on them as much as he likes. And sarve 'em right, too; for what do they know of the vally of money? Do *they* understand the fair prices of anything they wear, eat, or drink? Not at all. They haven't the gumption even to inquire, and must take for granted what we choose to tell them. It's only fair that we poor servants should have our perquisites, as well as tailors, hatters, bootmakers, and all the rest of those that are employed by our masters, and, if we hadn't, *they* would be none the richer, for every one has a pull on 'em one way or another, which is the reason so many of 'em get ruined before they know where they are. The truth is, noblemen are so extravagant — can't deny themselves anything while they have money or credit to procure it—they're sure to be done up, even if *we* didn't make a guinea by them: therefore, it's but right that we should have our share of the plunder when it's going on at every side.

"I wonder what makes my lord meddle with Mr. Strathern's love affair with Miss Sydney, now that he's going to be married himself? How he changed colour when I told him that Mr. Strathern was always at Mrs. Sydney's, and that the young lady and he were fonder of each other than ever! He can't be jealous, can he? Yet there must be some reason for his looking so vexed. I'll find it out, though, for it's my

hopinion that *we* have as much right to our master's secrets as to their cast clothes. Well, he'll have a precious wife in this Hirish woman. Ma'mselle Justine tells me she's the biggest fool in the whole world —thinks of nothing but eating, drinking, and dressing, and that *she* can, by a little flattery, make her believe, or do anything. My heyes! what a table we'll keep when she comes to rule the roast! I'll not spend a farthing of my board-wages, that I won't; and I'll swell up the bills—won't I! Justine is a clever gal, I must say; and, though not a reglar beauty, there's a *jenny si quoy*, as the French say, about her that is very engaging. But she has a temper of her own, I'm afraid, and will be wanting to take her own way, and that will not be quite so pleasant. *Cimety gal*, as she says herself, I'll soon bring her to reason, by fair means or foul, that I can tell her."

So reasoned the respectable Mr Durnford, as he arranged the dressing-table, and put in order the room of his master, giving a voice to his reflections, as was his wont when alone, and sure that they were not likely to be overheard by any listeners, a security which his knowledge that no English person was within reach of sound gave him. He then sate down to enjoy the luxurious repast prepared for Lord Alexander Beaulieu, which having washed down with a bottle of claret to be charged to the account of his lordship, he sallied forth to pay his evening visit to

Ma'mselle Justine, whom he found in a less good humour than usual.

"*Ah! vous voila*, Monsieur Tournefort, here you are! Vat *bête* your master ees. I have not de patience vid dat man, he so fool."

"Heyday! what's the matter now, ma'mselle? Why, hang me, my pretty Justine, if you don't look as cross as two sticks, and as sour as vinegar."

"Vat you mean vid your two sticks, dat has not de sense common? You talk of two sticks, and feedlesticks — vat for you speak always of sticks? *Ma foi, vous meritez le baton, bête que vous êtes.*"

"There, now, I'm sure you said something spiteful, ma'mselle, you looked so malicious, and spoke French. I always suspect you are saying no good when you speak your own language."

"*Quel imbecille! O, les Anglais! les Anglais! — qu'ils sont bêtes—mon Dieu, qu'ils sont bêtes!*"

"There, again, you are at it. But why can't you come to the point, and tell me what my master has done?"

"Done, done!—vy, he has let Madame Maclaurine see dat he not lofe her not at all; and she is vex, vex, and say she has good mind not to marry him not at all, and, *ma foi*, she have *raison*. Vat for, if he vant to marry her, he vex her, and let her see he not lofe her? Time enough for do dat ven he is her hoseband."

"You are right, my pretty Justine — quite right. It *was* very foolish of my lord, and I can't think why he did so. But you are so clever, and have such influence with your mistress, that I dare say you will soon set everything to rights."

"*Certainement, certainement;* but moche trouble I have, for, do madame is very fool in some tings, she not fool in all; and, ven she begins to see, it is not *facile* to make her shut her eyes after, and I vas oblige to svear dat I know, dat every body do know, dat milor lofe her to folly before she vould believe it. But if your master veel not play his own *rôle* in de *comedie*, it is no use for me to play mine, and so I veel tell him ven I see him. He most mind vat he is about, or he veel not have dis riche vife."

"By Jove! you alarm me, my pretty Justine. That *would* be a pretty job, indeed, and would be a sad disappointment for you and I, my sweet gal."

"For *me* not so moche, Monsieur Tournefort—for you, perhaps. *Qu'il est fât.*"

"Oh! for the matter of that, ma'mselle, if it would be no disappointment for *you*, I don't see why it should be to *me;* and, as for being fat, as you are pleased to say, though it isn't every one that's so mighty slim and genteel as *you* are, there's plenty of people who do not find fault with my fat, I can tell you; nor do I regret it, ma'mselle, for it proves I haven't lived upon frogs all my life, whatever some folks may have done."

Durnford's face got so red, and his manner indicated so much anger, that Justine, who did not quite comprehend his meaning, looked at him with surprise, and then, bursting into a hearty laugh, she exclaimed,—

"*Ah, mon Dieu! quelle bonne farce.* He tink ven I say he is a *fât*, I talk of his person, ven I tink only of his mind."

"Then you mean to say I am fat-headed, or, in other words, that I am a fool," said Durnford. "I thank you for the compliment, ma'mselle; but I'd have you to know I'm no more a fool than my neighbours, whatever they may think to the contrary."

"You not onderstand vat I mean, Monsieur Tournefort. I not tink you fat in de person, nor fool, but I tink you have de vanity, yes, a great deal of de vanity, and dat is vat I said; but you not onderstand de French."

"Oh! that's quite another affair, ma'mselle," replied Durnford, brightening up. "As for vanity, I believe I have some reason for that, my pretty Justine. I am not ill-looking, am I?" and he drew himself up, and strutted about the room.

"No, Monsieur Tournefort, you are vere good-looking man, vat people call hansome; I not say de *contraire*."

"Yes, Justine, I flatter myself we shan't make a plain couple, no, nor an ill-dressed one neither; for

you are the best dressed young lady I know in all Rome, and I think I may say there's not a nobleman's valet here that makes so helegant an appearance as I do, is there?"

"But all ve talk dese matters is not no good, *mon ami*. You forget, in tinking only about yourself, dat dere is great danger dat your master may, after all, not marry madame, and therefore it ees of de *plus grande* importance — dat ees, of de vere great consequence — dat milor pay moche attention, dat he make de *cour à* Madame Maclaurine, to make her believe vonce more dat he lofe her vid all hees heart, dat he not able to live vidout her; and, I believe," said Justine, smiling maliciously, "dat dis ees vere true, for I have hear dat *pauvre* milor has not no fortune."

"Why, he's not overburthened with cash, to say the truth, ma'mselle, but he comes of a great and noble family, and that's something, isn't it? And he can make your mistress a lady, and that's a precious sight more than nature has done or could do for her."

"Ah, Monsieur Tournefort, in *notre belle France*, madame could find moche grander titles dan milor. She could become a marquise, or even duchesse, for half de money. But she ees so ignorant, so stupide, she not like to marry a Frenchman."

"And she's right there, ma'mselle. Why should she let her money go out of her own country, I should like to know?"

"She find better husband in France—*plus poli, plus aimable.*"

"I deny it. A fig for their polish. But I see, ma'mselle, you are always setting up your countrymen above mine, and I don't like it; and what's more, I won't stand it, that's what I won't." And Durnford seized his hat, and walked towards the door, but before he opened it, he turned to cast one more look at the coquettish Mam'selle Justine, who, somewhat alarmed lest he should withdraw in anger, and so defeat any of her projects, suppressed every symptom of her displeasure, and forced a laugh.

"Vy, vat a fool man you are, Monsieur Tournefort! I only say all dat to make you jealous. Ha! ha! ha!" and again she laughed aloud.

"Ah, you little jade! I have a great mind to punish you for tormenting me so. How could you be so wicked?" and Mr. Durnford threw down his hat, and imprinted a kiss on the lips of Ma'mselle Justine.

"Have done, have done!" exclaimed she; "you *chiffonez* my cap and my hair. *Regardez!*" and she ran to the mirror, and began arranging her curls and her cap. That operation performed, and it appeared a momentous one, the *femme de chambre* addressed her admirer as follows:—"Now, do not forget to tell your master dat madame has de suspicion vere moche, and dat he most be vere moche vid her, and make de court, and tell her she is *charmante;* for, if he does

not, she will break off de marriage, and dere vill be an end of de business."

"I'll be sure to tell my lord," replied Durnford, fully determined not to say a word on the subject, well knowing that, though to a certain degree in the confidence of his master, there were some points, and this was one of them, on which he could not take the liberty of speaking; but, not wishing to let the Frenchwoman see that he was on a more reserved footing with his lord, than she was with her mistress.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Bright sparkling gems and silken sheen
Can ne'er disguise a vulgar mien;
These, spite of art, but more reveal
That which the wearer would conceal,
And those who view these gauds of pride
The weak vain owner will deride.

It was now the moment when the carnival was about to wind up the gaieties of Rome, and the eternal city, during a few days, presented scenes so grotesque, that one unaccustomed to such exhibitions might suppose that the saturnalia of the ancients was again being enacted. Masks of every description, and in the most fanciful costumes, thronged the streets, and the Corso, the focus of attraction on these occasions, was crowded. The balconies on each side of the street were filled with beautiful women, and their attendant *cavalieri*, while the centre was covered by carriages of every description, from the rich but cumbrous coaches and chariots of the Roman *noblesse*, and the neat and

well appointed English equipages, down to the crazy and rattling vehicles on hire. The occupants of these carriages were as distinct and different as the conveyances themselves. In the heavy and gilded coaches and chariots of the Romans might be seen the high and finely chiselled brows, large lustrous eyes, and pale olive complexions that appertain to the noble dames of Italy, but peculiarly to those of Rome. The gravity of their aspects, too, accorded well with the stately though somewhat faded grandeur of their equipages, and reminded one of those fine cameos from which we form our first impressions of the character of beauty of the daughters of "the ancient mistress of the world."

Nor did the faces to be seen in the neat and well-appointed carriages of England belie the fame decreed to the loveliness of her female progeny. Foreheads fair as Parian marble, delicately pencilled brows, eyes blue as the skies above them, and cheeks that vied with the rose, proclaimed these fair and blooming flowers to have been nurtured in the garden of England. But what pen can describe the heterogeneous and incongruous groups that filled the hired vehicles? Sultanas elbowed peasants in their holiday attire; ladies, in the costumes of the Fourteenth Louis, reclined by the side of Negresses, in Barbaric, but somewhat tinselled finery; and nuns—oh, profanation!—figured with the Marians de l'Orme of their day, with their

draperies "in most admired disorder." Hercules, like the wonderful bird described by the Irishman, seemed to possess the power of being at many places at once, for whichever way the eye glanced, it was sure to encounter a representative of this Pagan man of might, with the skin of the Nemean lion worn as a trophy over his shoulder, and his club in hand. To judge by the soiled appearance of the elastic web which figured for skin on the hero, one might conclude that he had but very lately completed the task of cleansing the Augean stables. Nothing could well be more ludicrous than these representatives of the son of Jupiter and Alcmena, being for the most part by no means remarkable for the height or muscular proportions of their stature, or for that courage attributed to their prototype, as was evinced by the dexterity with which they avoided danger, and their shrinking dismay when assailed by the showers of *bonbons*, which were thrown from the balconies and windows on either side of the Corso. Nor was the God of War without his copyists, and most grotesque ones they were. Vulcans, too, limped after Venuses, who, alas! bore no symptoms of having lately come in contact with any purer waves than those of the turbid Tiber; and Junoes, forgetful of the dignity of the wife of the Immortal Thunderer, elbowed their way along, with a vigour that would not have shamed one of the athletæ of old. The very coachmen who drove the hired

vehicles personated characters—some figured as old women, in the most absurd costumes, while others were attired as Bacchantes, crowned with grapes, which shook as they were jolted by the movement of the carriages.

The ambassadors, in their state equipages, had just driven through the Corso, when all eyes were attracted by a very gaudy chariot, with a coachman and three footmen, wearing the most showy liveries, and the horses nearly covered with ribands. In the carriage were seated two ladies, one of whom was in the costume of a sultana, wearing a profusion of costly jewels. The *outré* appearance of this lady, who was also very plain, joined to the bad taste and gaudiness of her equipage, produced considerable merriment among the crowd, while showers of *bonbons* saluted the sultana from every side, much to her annoyance, as was testified by angry looks and violent gestures. The carriage of this lady stopped at the next door to the house in the balcony of which Lady Wellerby, her daughters, Mrs. and Miss Sydney, Strathern, and Mr. Rhymer had taken their places, and soon after the sultana and her companion took their seats on an adjoining balcony, to which all eyes were directed.

"The widow of the stockbroker, by all that is good!" exclaimed Mr. Rhymer to Mrs. Sydney. "Is she not charming? What a sultana! I must get as

near her as I can, for her remarks must be as amusing as her appearance."

"Don't tell me that it's the custom to throw things in this way," said Mrs. Maclaurin—for it was no other than that lady—to her alarmed companion, Mrs. Bernard. "Look at me; see how I am scratched and bruised. I dare say I shall be black and blue all over, to-morrow. A pack of brutes to pelt a lady in this manner. And they call this pleasure, do they? Who ever saw such a thing happen in England!"

"You should have held the tin shield before your face, madam, and that would have saved you."

"But if I had, what would have been the good of wearing my diamonds?—nobody would have seen them."

To this remark Mrs. Bernard made no reply, but, scarcely had it been uttered, when a shower of *bonbons*, thrown with unerring aim, alighted on the face and person of Mrs. Maclaurin, who, irritated by the bruises they inflicted, and the chalky stains left on her dress, neck, and arms, angrily seized a quantity of the same missiles from a depôt of them provided by her courrier, and launched them with all her might at the crowd. The violence of her gestures, and the redness of her face and neck, occasioned by her wrathful emotions, as well as by the movement of her arms, rendered her a most ludicrous as well as a most conspicuous object, and, as the passing crowd looked up

at her, peals of laughter might be heard, which greatly increased her anger.

"Look at her," said Mr. Rhymer; "she resembles nothing human at this moment, with that dark, red face, around which so many brilliants are sparkling. She reminds me of the pieces of raw meat said to be thrown into the Valley of Diamonds, and to which so many of those precious gems adhere. I only wish that some vast bird of prey would descend and bear her off in his talons, as these said pieces of raw flesh are served for sake of preserving the diamonds. But this wish cannot fail to be accomplished. Some bird of prey, in the shape of a ruined spendthrift, for love of filthy lucre, will bear away this creature one of these days, notwithstanding her ugliness and vulgarity."

"Let me implore you, madam, to desist," said Mrs. Bernard, in the most humble accents, her own person covered with white marks from the showers of *bonbons* that had hit her.

"But, I tell you, I *won't* desist. Haven't I as good a right to throw at them as they have to throw at me?" and, suiting the action to the words, she filled both her large hands with the sweetmeats, and discharged them at the passers-by, who, in turn, sent up such a volley at her that she found herself almost blinded, and screamed with pain and passion. Nevertheless, again and again she threw down handfuls of

bonbons with a violence of action and vigour that denoted the rage she was in, and convinced her antagonists, and their name was legion, that the sultana must be a man in disguise. This belief induced a continuation of hostilities on their part much stronger than ought or than probably would have been directed towards a woman, until the police thought it necessary to interfere; but even then the spirited sultana, determined to remain victor of the field, continued to pelt her late assailants with such pertinacity and force that two of the police deemed it expedient to enter the house from the balcony of which she was so actively hurling defiance at her foes, and soon stood beside her, to the terror of Mrs. Bernard, who, with dishevelled locks and disordered garments, stood entrenched behind Mrs. Maclaurin, who was loudly and angrily reproaching her for her pusillanimity in not appearing in the brunt of the action, and for not lending her assistance to discomfit her foes.

"Oh! for Heaven's sake, madam, stop!" cried the timid *dame de compagnie:* "here are the police, and you will be arrested."

"What do I care for them?" replied the lady. "Was it I that began the affray? and haven't I a right to defend myself? A pack of cowardly ragamuffins, to attack one of the fair sex!"

The appearance of the speaker was so wholly at variance with all idea of the sex to whose privilege and

claim to protection she referred, that none of the persons on the adjoining balcony who heard her—and she spoke so loudly that nearly all did — could resist laughing.

"Pretty usage for the fair sex, indeed!" observed Mr. Rhymer, with a comical mixture of gravity and mischief in his pale countenance.

All the individuals on the balcony of Mrs. Sydney and her party now lent attentive ears to hear what was passing between Mrs. Maclaurin and the police. These last, with considerable sternness, commanded the excited combatant to desist, but she, wholly ignorant of their language, glanced defiance at them. Mrs. Bernard then explained to her the purport of their visit, and the prudence of not resisting their advice.

"Hold your tongue, you stupid fool!" replied Mrs. Maclaurin, her face flushing anew with anger. "I don't know their lingo, and I don't want to understand what they say; then why should you, like a busybody thankless, try to explain it to me? Hold your tongue, I say, and leave me to talk to them. What do you mean by coming up to my balcony to insult me, I should like to know?" said the dauntless amazon, confronting the police, and placing her arms in the posture in which Holbein painted the bluff Harry the Eighth. "I'd have you to know that I'm an English woman, ay, and a rich one too, able to

buy half your dirty old city, with its shabby ruins, and your old Pope into the bargain."

The men stared at her with astonishment, but, evidently angered by her contemptuous looks at them, and her violent gestures, they were preparing to lay hands on her in order to remove her from the balcony, when Strathern advanced, and, addressing them in Italian, explained that the lady did not understand their language, and was ignorant that she committed any impropriety in throwing *bonbons* at those who had so roughly pelted them at her. He requested that they would no further molest his countrywoman, and, to enforce his arguments in her favour, slipped a golden coin into the hand of the superior of the police, which seemed so satisfactory a plea to him, that, having stipulated for the lady's observing a less belligerent line of conduct and demeanour for the rest of the day, he and his companion withdrew, and left Mrs. Maclaurin and her *dame de compagnie* in peaceful possession of her balcony.

"I'm sure I'm very much obleeged to you," said that lady. "You have behaved very much like a gentleman to me, that's what you have, which is more than some people have;" and she cast an angry glance at Mr. Rhymer, whose sneers and sepulchral smile she had detected. "I have no notion of submitting to ill-treatment, and though I am but a woman, I will always stand up for the honour of Old England

against a pack of foreign, half-starved, beggarly foreigners. Why, I could buy the whole of them, and not be much the poorer for it, for, God be thanked, I can count hundreds, ay, and thousands, too, with most people; and there's a lord in Rome at present who, if he knew how I have been insulted by them ragamuffins, would soon settle 'em, and maybe I'll soon be a lady of title myself, and then some people," and she again looked angrily at Mr. Rhymer, "will not be so ready with their sneers and smiles."

Strathern, having bowed, was about to turn away from the spot, when Mrs. Maclaurin again addressed him:—

"Will you tell me your name, sir, that I may know to whom I am so much obleeged?"

"Strathern, madam; but I assure you, you owe me no obligation whatever; I only did for you what I should have done for any lady under similar circumstances."

"It's very genteel of you, sir, to make light of your kindness; but only think, if I was taken off, God only knows where, by them horrible police, with all my jewels," and she glanced complacently at the rich ornaments on her person, "what a terrible thing it would be! You must really come and dine with me at the Hotel Bretagne. You'll not find a better dinner in all Rome, I can tell you, for I spare no expense—why should I? And you'll meet a noble-

man of great fashion, who takes potluck with me most days."

"I am sorry, madam, that I cannot have the honour of waiting on you."

"Well, sure another day will do as well, and you can't be engaged for every day."

"I regret that it is quite out of my power to avail myself of your kindness." And, making a low bow, Strathern turned from the end of the balcony adjoining Mrs. Maclaurin, and took his place by Louisa Sydney.

"What a strange man, and yet he is very genteel, too!" said Mrs. Maclaurin to her *dame de compagnie*. "Indeed, I may say he is one of the most elegant men I ever saw, though there is something proud and distant-like in his behaviour. It was for all the world as if he didn't wish to come and dine with me. Don't you think so?"

"Yes, madam, he appeared unwilling to cultivate your acquaintance," replied the meek Mrs. Bernard, almost afraid to admit this humiliating fact to the lady who elicited the acknowledgment.

"What can be the reason?" resumed Mrs. Maclaurin. "He must have seen by my jewels that none but a lady of great fortune could afford to wear 'em, so it's strange he wasn't ready to jump at my invitation. But there's something very odd in all these *grandees*. One never knows how to take them,

for they are as full of fancies as a dancing bear. Even my lord himself isn't free from 'em. Ah! a thought strikes me, and I'll engage I'm right. He was afraid to come for fear of making my lord jealous, for I mentioned that maybe I'd soon be a titled lady myself, and afterwards I said there was a lord who dined with me most days. I did it just to show him I wasn't a nobody, and you may depend it frightened him from coming. Well, perhaps 'twas all for the better, for my lord is always very crusty about my having young men about me, and has refused to introduce any. But I'm determined on one thing, which is, that I must not lay under an obligation to this gentleman, for I'll send him a present of a diamond ring, with a motto engraved on it, and I'll make the motto myself. I make verses very often when I have nothing else to think of, but I soon forget 'em, so now take your tablets out of your pocket, and write down what I tell you."

Mrs. Bernard did as she was told, and Mrs. Maclaurin, after a few minutes' reflection, dictated to her the following lines:—

> Because from the police you did me save,
> I send this ring in honour of the brave.

"What do you think of that?" demanded she with an air of triumph. "Now, I'd bet a guinea, if I asked you to compose a motto, you'd have spent an

hour about it, and not have done it half so well. I'm the one for knocking off a verse at a minute's notice."

Mr. Rhymer, who had overheard all that was passing between Mrs. Maclaurin and her *dame de compagnie*, and who was infinitely amused at it, observed to Lady Wellerby that it was a pity that the lady in the next balcony did not publish her poetry.

This remark caught the ear of Mrs. Maclaurin, who instantly turned and said. "Why should I publish my poetry, I should like to know? Who does that, except poor shabby people, who want money? I make verses to please myself, and *am* rich enough to buy all the poetry ever made in England, I can tell you."

"No one doubts your wealth, madam, in any way. Of your intellectual riches you have just given an indubitable proof."

"Yes, I have plenty of proofs about me," and she glanced at her ornaments. "Who but a lady of great fortune could afford to wear such jewels as these?"

"Far be it from me, madam, to doubt your wealth, talents, or good taste," observed Mr. Rhymer. "None who have the happiness of seeing you could call them in question."

"You speak civilly enough now, but let me tell you that I saw you sneering and smiling, for all the world like one of those frightful faces I have seen when I

have had the nightmare, after eating too hearty a supper."

This coarse comparison produced a laugh from all present, which, though they endeavoured to suppress it, was nevertheless visible to Mr. Rhymer, who, casting on his *soi-disant* friends a glance in which anger and scorn were mingled, turned away, and left the balcony.

"Did you ever see a look like that?" demanded Mrs. Maclaurin of Lady Wellerby, who happened to be placed at the end of the balcony next her; but that lady, unwilling to encourage any approach to conversation with the *parvenue*, affected not to hear her remark.

"Are you deaf, ma'am?" resumed the widow. "I spoke to you just now, and you might have the common civility of giving an answer."

"I make it a point, madam, of never conversing with persons I don't know," replied Lady Wellerby, assuming an air of *hauteur*.

"Then why did you spake to me at the ball cost-chew me, I'd like to know? for I recollect your voice, though I didn't remember your face, it looks so much worse by daylight than when it was painted up to make you appear like a queen."

"Pray, mamma, don't answer her," said Lady Sophia.

"And why not, miss? If that's the politeness your

mother has taught you, you haven't much to thank her for, but she has been as kind to you as Nature has, for I declare I never in all my born days saw a plainer woman."

"I wish my carriage was come," said Lady Wellerby; "I really don't like being exposed to that person's rudeness."

"You don't, don't you? I should like to know who began it? If you had answered me civilly when I spoke to you, I'd have been as polite as any lady in Rome; but as you choosed to show your airs, I've just given you a bit of my mind. I suppose that horrid-looking little old man that I sent away, by making you all laugh at him, is your husband, for I see a great family likeness between him and your daughter. What a pity you hadn't twins of her!"

"For Heaven's sake, madam, say no more!" interposed Mrs. Bernard, casting an appealing glance at Mrs. Maclaurin.

"And why not, pray? Am I to hold my tongue and look like a fool, because I meet an ugly, rude old woman, and her ugly, rude daughter? I didn't hire you to teach me manners, but to do as you are told, so mind your own business, and don't interfere with me."

"Mr. Strathern, will you ask one of the servants to inquire for my carriage. I really must leave this," said Lady Wellerby.

"Maybe, you'd leave us a lock of your hair—no, a

lock of your wig," observed Mrs. Maclaurin, bursting into a coarse laugh.

"Pray change places with me, Olivia. I cannot stay near that person."

Lady Olivia did as she was requested, but foolishly bestowed a contemptuous glance at her mother's tormentor.

"You need not look so disdainful, miss, for you are ugly enough in all conscience, without making grimaces," observed Mrs. Maclaurin. "You also have the family likeness to your wizen-face father, with something of your plain mother joined to it. You are, indeed, as ugly a family as ever I'd wish to look at."

Strathern now re-entered the balcony, and acquainted Lady Wellerby that no carriage would be permitted to approach the door until after the promenade in the Corso was over, which would not be before the expiration of two hours. "If, however," continued Strathern, in French, and in a low tone of voice, "you will not take notice of the lady in the next balcony, and prevent the ladies Sophia and Olivia from looking at or replying to her, she will, I dare say, leave off addressing you."

"Oh! my dear Mrs. Sydney," exclaimed Lady Wellerby, "what a dreadful person! She has positively quite fluttered me. How fortunate it is that Lord Wellerby or Lord Fitzwarren was not here. There is no knowing to what extremities they might

not have proceeded, for both are impetuous, particularly in all that regards the feelings of those dear to them. I am so accustomed to the protection of my lord, that the least thing in his absence alarms me. You, who have been for twenty-four years deprived of similar protection, and who have of course got accustomed to act for yourself and bustle through life, can form no idea of my timidity and nervousness."

There was a double purpose in this speech, of which Mrs. Sydney was well aware. The first was, to take for granted that Louisa Sydney was five or six years older than she really was, for the sake of passing off her own daughters as being the same age; and the second was, to remind Mrs. Sydney of the loss of her husband, in doing which Lady Wellerby had a spiteful pleasure, in revenge for the envy Mrs. Sydney's wealth and independence excited in her breast. Often had Lady Wellerby confessed to herself that she would gladly have changed positions with her whose unprotected state she affected to pity, and the beauty and fortune of whose daughter created such a jealousy in her and hers. But these *coups de pattes* produced no other effect on Mrs. Sydney's mind than a sentiment of pity for the weakness and littleness of the understanding that could find pleasure in inflicting them, and she never condescended to notice or refute them.

"We receive such delightful letters from Lord Fitzwarren," said Lady Wellerby, "that I am glad I carried my point of making him fill up the time that must elapse before the marriage settlements can come from England, by making an excursion into those parts of Italy which he had not previously seen. I had, as you may suppose, the utmost difficulty to persuade him to go, for he could not, poor fellow, bear the notion of being separated from Olivia for a few weeks; but I was firm, and insisted on the measure, for nothing seems so tiresome to me as the courting days that occur between the acceptance of a lover and the nuptials."

Lady Wellerby looked at Louisa Sydney and Strathern, as if to apply her opinion to their peculiar case.

"I should have thought," replied Mrs. Sydney, calmly, "that you would have been pleased at an opportunity of getting better acquainted with the disposition and habits of your future son-in-law."

"Oh, dear! I have nothing to learn in this respect. I am very quick in discovering the character and disposition of those with whom I associate; and Lord Fitzwarren's heart is so guileless, and his mind so transparent, that it requires but a short time, indeed, to become perfectly well acquainted with him. Then, poor dear fellow, he is so desperately in love that he cannot conceal any of his peculiarities. I never, since

the time that Lord Wellerby became enamoured with me, beheld any man so much in love as Lord Fitzwarren. He was quite desperate, I assure you, and made such a scene at parting from Olivia that I quite pitied him, and was almost tempted to recal my sentence of temporary banishment."

Lady Sophia, who overheard her mother's monologue, turned up her eyes to the clouds, as if to appeal to the Gods to bear witness to the outrage on veracity which that good lady was perpetrating, and Lady Olivia looked embarrassed.

"When a man is in love for the first time," resumed Lady Wellerby, "and this, I presume, you are aware, was the case with Lord Fitzwarren, it is but natural that he should be a little disposed to make a fool of himself, and spoil, or at least endeavour to spoil, the object of his affection. I was afraid of this, so sent him away, and I should advise all mothers under similar circumstances to follow my example, for it is tiresome, if not injurious, to see a man for months tied to a young lady's apron-string, and following her about like a tame lapdog;" and again the speaker fixed her gaze on Louisa Sydney and Strathern, who were conversing together, unmindful of the envious glances of the Ladies Sophia and Olivia Wellerby, and their mother.

While the conversation we have noted was occurring in Mrs. Sydney's balcony, Mrs. Maclaurin,

heartily tired of enacting the *rôle* of sultana, kept continually looking at her diamond-set watch in anxiety for the arrival of her carriage to remove her from the place, of which she had got perfectly fatigued.

"And they call this pleasure, do they?" said she to her wearied and forlorn-looking companion. "Was there ever such an imposition on the public? And to think that I have paid ten louis a day for the hire of this balcony, to have my face, neck, and arms battered and bruised by the pelting I have got; my arms, too, are so tired from throwing, that I can hardly move them. How mad my lord will be when he hears how I have been treated! He'll never believe that the police would have the impudence to dare lay hands on a lady of my fortin. I dare say, if the truth were known, that they were brigands in disguise, who, seeing my fine jewels, laid a plot to carry me off, and keep me until I paid them a large ransom, just as somebody read to me in England happened to a rich lady. Yes, I'm quite sure they were brigands."

The carriages were now permitted to drive to the door; and Mrs. Maclaurin, casting a glance of the utmost disdain at Lady Wellerby, and kissing her hand to Strathern, entered hers, and drove off.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Oh! never smooth did run the course of love:
So wrote a bard all other bards above,
For e'en where fortune wears its brightest smile,
And hope's resolved to certainty, the while
That nought opposes happiness, some care,
Before unthought of, finds an entrance there
Where only peace and confidence did reign,
And every fond illusion turns to pain.
Ah, me! that hearts the fondest should receive
Suspicion, guest that comes but to deceive,
And banish faith, the shield that love should guard,
Which brings its own exceeding great reward.

"I must absent myself from you this evening, dearest Louisa," said Strathern to his betrothed; when, having, for the first time since his engagement to her daughter, declined an invitation to dinner from Mrs. Sydney, he was on the point of leaving them.

"*Not* dine here, and *not* come in the evening!" repeated Louisa, with an air in which disappointment, if not displeasure, was mingled with surprise.

"So it must be, I regret to say, for I have promised to spend this evening with an old and much valued friend, in very delicate health, who arrived last night, *en route* for Naples."

"And who is your friend?" asked Miss Sydney.

"Lord Delmington."

"The son of the Marquis of Roehampton, I presume," observed Mrs. Sydney. "I knew his father and mother well, many years ago, and Lady Roehampton was a most amiable and excellent person."

"Her son inherits all her amiability, with her delicate constitution also, and is, I fear, in a hopeless state of health."

"The marchioness, I believe, has been dead some years, which must have greatly affected the happiness of her son, for the Marquis of Roehampton was a stern and cold man, the only tenderness of whose nature was evinced by a strong attachment to his amiable and excellent wife."

"Yes," replied Strathern, "my poor friend sustained a heavy loss in the death of his mother, who exercised a most humanizing influence over her proud and austere husband, who, ever since she was snatched from him, has relapsed into an unbending sternness and gloom, that has rendered the paternal mansion far from an agreeable home to his only son."

"I should like to see Lord Delmington," said Mrs. Sydney, "and show him any attention or kindness in

my power, not only on account of my former friendship for his mother, but of yours with him."

"Unfortunately he is not at present able to avail himself of your good-natured intentions in his favour, as he is such an invalid as to be unable to walk without assistance."

"But you need not, surely, remain with your friend the *whole* evening," said Louisa Sydney. "An invalid would probably wish to retire to his bed at an early hour, and then you could come to us."

"I must be guided by my poor friend's wishes, dear Louisa, on this occasion, for he would take it ill were I, after so long a separation, to hurry away from him."

Miss Sydney looked and felt displeased, and Strathern marked with dissatisfaction that she was so. Far from feeling gratified by what a few weeks previously he would have considered as an unequivocal proof of the affection of his affianced wife, he looked on her unwillingness to his absenting himself for the evening as a mark of the self-will which, on a former occasion, he had detected in her disposition. Perhaps his countenance betrayed what was passing in his mind, or that, unconsciously, his manner revealed it to the quick-sighted Louisa, for immediately hers became changed, and, assuming an air of indifference she was far from feeling, she saw him take his hat to depart, scarcely vouchsafing him her hand; and ere

he had time to descend the stairs, he heard her playing a lively air on her pianoforte. Her music, for the first time, jarred on his ear. Was she enacting a part in thus appearing so indifferent, when only a few minutes previously she had exhibited such a desire for his returning to see her in the evening? On descending into the Piazza d'Espagna, he crossed, as he was wont, to the opposite side, and turned his eyes to see if Louisa was at the window, to kiss her hand to him, a little ceremony of love she was accustomed to perform every day when he left her, even though he only went away to dress for dinner, and was to return in an hour or two. So used had he been to see her at that window, gazing after him until his form receded from her view, that again and again he paused to look back, in the hope that she would appear; but no fair form met his anxious gaze, no delicate hand waved him an adieu, and, hurt and mortified, he recalled with bitterness all that had formerly displeased him in the unaccountable coldness and change of manner in his betrothed wife, after the *bal costumé*.

"She loves me not," thought Strathern, "or, if she does, her self-will is stronger than her affection. If she were pained at my leaving her for a whole evening, could she have seen me depart without one kind word or glance, or could she have sat down to the piano to play that brisk noisy air—I shall always hate it—which sounded so disagreeably in my ears while I de-

scended the stairs? Ah! why is not she as faultless in mind as she is in face and in person?"

Mrs. Sydney observed that her daughter was displeased; for as soon as Strathern had time to leave the house, Louisa ceased playing, and abruptly closed her pianoforte. She then took up her pencil and began sketching, but that occupation was also as quickly abandoned to give place to a book, the leaves of which she listlessly turned over, with an air of abstraction that denoted how little she was interested in their contents. The book, too, was soon thrown aside, and Louisa, with a clouded brow, arose and left the *salon*. Mrs. Sydney was more than half disposed to detain her daughter, and draw her into a conversation in which she might introduce the advice she so anxiously longed to give Louisa, and of which she evidently stood so much in need, for the fond mother beheld with regret that her daughter's *exigeance* and waywardness, whatever might be the cause, might have a serious influence on the happiness of her affianced husband, if not on her own. But, on reflection, she feared to touch on the subject she so much wished to counsel Louisa on, while the mind of the latter was still irritated, and postponed giving her advice until her daughter was in a more propitious mood to receive it.

"My poor Louisa," thought Mrs. Sydney, "how much has she to learn ere she can bestow or receive

the happiness I desire her to enjoy! She expects an obedience to her will, and an attention to her wishes, that few, if any, men, however in love, are disposed to yield, and bitter will be her disappointment when she discovers this fact. O! may it not destroy her chance of conjugal felicity! I fear I have been much to blame for my unwise and weak indulgence to her. Too late do I perceive my error, and gladly, oh! how gladly, would I atone for it! I saw that Mr. Strathern was hurt and annoyed by her manner, when he explained why he could not return here this evening. He left her in displeasure, and may, at this moment, be reflecting with chagrin on her affected indifference when he took leave of her.

"My poor dear Louisa, mine is the fault. Yours was a temper and disposition that in wiser, firmer hands might—nay, must have rendered you happy yourself, and a source of happiness to others. Why, oh! why have I, by my weak, my doting fondness, allowed tares to spring up where only flowers were meant to bloom? Even now, though conscious of my great error, I have not the courage or the power to cope with its baleful effects. I shrink with pusillanimity from the task of revealing to her the risk she incurs in injuring, if not of destroying, her repose by expecting and exacting a devotion beyond that which lordly man is disposed to accord, even to her he best loves. I have forfeited her filial respect to my coun-

sel by the weakness with which from her childhood I have yielded assent to her wishes, and now count only on the tie I hold on her affection."

Such were the grave and painful reflections that passed through the mind of Mrs. Sydney in the solitude in which her daughter left her for two hours. They met not again until dinner, when the anxious mother discovered traces of tears in the eyes of her child, and noticed that her cheek was pale from emotion. The repast was nearly a silent one. Neither mother nor daughter had any appetite to partake of the viands placed before them, and although each attempted to impose on the other by affecting to eat, neither was deceived, and both were conscious of a painful state of constraint.

There are few situations more irksome than that in which two persons fondly attached find themselves when the thoughts of both are occupied by one subject, which, for some cause or other, neither likes to touch upon. Both mother and daughter felt this, and each experienced a self-reproach—the parent, because by her false indulgence she had lost the influence she ought to have possessed over her daughter; and the daughter, because she admitted to herself that a false pride precluded her from seeking sympathy and consolation from her mother. Anxious to escape from a *téte-à-téte* which, under existing circumstances, promised to be so cheerless, Louisa Sydney proposed

that, as the night was peculiarly fine, they should drive to the Coliseum.

"As we are so soon to leave Rome, perhaps it will be the last evening, dear mother, that we can visit this spot, which I confess has, when lit by the moonbeams, a peculiar attraction for me," said the lovely girl; and Mrs. Sydney immediately assented, making it a condition to her compliance that her daughter should put on a warm pelisse and shawl. Arrived at the Coliseum, Louisa proposed that they should leave the carriage, and, attended by their servant, once more walk through the vast arena; and, although Mrs. Sydney made some objections, they were soon overruled by her daughter, and arm in arm they entered this noble vestige of Roman grandeur.

"Let us retire behind yonder abutment," said Louisa, "and thence in its deep shade observe the glorious effect of the moonbeams as they enter through the arches on the opposite side."

"We shall be chilled, dearest," replied Mrs. Sydney, "and, to own the truth, I am somewhat timid in so lonely a place and with only one attendant."

"Indulge me this once, dear mother. Indeed, there is nothing to dread. Yonder priest is within hearing, and no brigands have frequented this spot since it has been consecrated to religious uses."

While thus conversing, Louisa led her mother into the dark portion of the building, whence, as she had

anticipated, a fine view of the building illumined by the moonbeams met their gaze, and they were contemplating it in silent and rapt admiration when the sound of approaching footsteps announced the immediate vicinity of other visitors to the spot. A male figure, with a lady leaning on his arm, walked slowly in front of the recess where Mrs. Sydney and Louisa stood, concealed by the deep shadow that surrounded them. The light fell on the countenance of the woman, which was upturned to that of her companion, who bent down with an air of deep attention to listen to her conversation. So exquisite was the beauty of the lady's face, illumined by the silver light, which invested it with something of a heavenly radiance, that both mother and daughter's gaze became fixed on it, and neither looked at the gentleman who accompanied the object of their admiration. The person who riveted their attention now passed so near them, that the sound of her voice could be heard as in accents low, clear, and musical, she said, "May I indeed depend on you?"

"Doubt me not. Have I not pledged my solemn promise?" replied the man, in well-known accents, which made both Mrs. Sydney and Louisa start, while the speaker, raising his head, as if appealing to the bright luminary then slowly sailing through the dark azure vault of heaven, revealed the face of Strathern.

Louisa felt as if an arrow had been shot through her

heart, and trembled so violently, that her mother threw both her arms around her slender waist, lest she should fall to the ground; yet she uttered no cry, although one of deep agony arose from her tortured breast to her lips; but, even in that moment of terrible trial, pride, indomitable pride, sealed those trembling lips, and sent back to her breast the cry that would have revealed her agony. Strathern and the lady walked slowly away, and Mrs. Sydney, herself nearly overpowered by emotion, bore her daughter to a stone bench that was near at hand. Louisa placed both her hands on her heart, as if to still its throbbings, which were so violent as to preclude the power of utterance, and to alarm her fond mother beyond measure.

"Let us go home, my child," said Mrs. Sydney. And there was such a depth of tenderness and pity in the tone in which these few simple words were uttered, that it found its way to her daughter's breast, and brought relief to her overcharged feelings by a flood of tears, with which those of the mother mingled.

"Let us go hence, my own Louisa," repeated Mrs. Sydney; and her daughter, slowly rising, and leaning on her arm, with trembling steps moved to the carriage.

"You saw him, mother, did you not?" demanded Louisa, in a low and tremulous voice, as if she wished her parent to throw a doubt on the evidence presented to her own eyes.

"Yes, dearest, I did see him; but we must not judge too hastily, nor by appearances — we must not condemn him unheard. He may be able to explain what now appears so mysterious, and I almost regret that I did not let him know our near vicinity to him."

"Ah! you say this, dear mother, to comfort me; but it is useless—it is vain. I have only myself to blame; for, had I confessed to you all that has passed in my breast since the night of the *bal costumé*, you would have counselled and supported me, and I had been spared the shock that has just now lacerated my heart, and shattered my nerves."

"My own Louisa — my precious child," murmured Mrs. Sydney, as she pressed her daughter fondly to her side.

"Yes, your own, *all* your own now!" whispered Louisa; "for henceforth, mother, to you, and you only, will your child look for happi—" but a burst of passionate tears broke the sentence.

"Do not, my Louisa, condemn him unheard; it is all I ask."

"Alas! mother, I no longer doubt. What I have beheld is but a confirmation of reports, to which I—fond and weak dupe!—refused credence; but now all is revealed."

How strange and wayward is the human heart! Louisa Sydney expected that her mother would make a more vigorous defence for Strathern, and urge all

the possible excuses for the romantic *tête-à-tête* they had both just witnessed, which were pleading in her own fond heart. Nay, more, she expected, and perhaps hoped, that Mrs. Sydney would assert, and persist in believing, that the lady they saw with Strathern must be some near relative, or the wife of some most intimate friend; and she, who would have given millions, had she possessed them, to be convinced of this, prepared herself to combat the reasoning of her parent. But when no such attempt to explain away the *tête-à-tête* walk they had unpremeditatedly witnessed was made, and that Mrs. Sydney confined herself to requesting that he might not be condemned unheard, Louisa's own heart pleaded more eloquently for her lover than all the reasoning of her mother could have done had she been disposed to employ it. A person, the most experienced in reading the human heart, and in judging its manifold mysteries and weaknesses, could not have adopted a more judicious course towards her daughter on the present trying occasion than that unconsciously pursued by Mrs. Sydney, who, thinking that Strathern's conduct was, to say the least of it, inexplicable, forbore to defend it until he should furnish her with the means. Gladly would she have urged some extenuation, if any offered itself, to her transparent and honourable mind; but, as she reflected on the pertinacity with which Strathern resisted the request of Louisa to return from his friend

and spend the latter part of the evening with them, she was compelled, however well disposed to think favourably of him, to admit that his presence at the Coliseum, *téte-à-téte* with the beautiful unknown, joined to the evidence of the few words they had heard him utter, afforded ground for suspicion even to the coolest and most disinterested observer.

When they reached home, and that the light in the drawing-room revealed to the anxious mother the change effected in her daughter's aspect since, a short time before, when they quitted that chamber with the roses of health blooming on her beautiful cheeks, how was Mrs. Sydney's heart touched and her maternal solicitude alarmed for her beloved child! Her anxiety, her tenderness, and, above all, the sympathy she evinced with Louisa's feelings, deeply touched that young lady, and so operated on her, that when placed on the sofa, with her hand fondly clasped in that of her mother, she revealed to her the mysterious whispers of the conjurer at the *bal costumé*, with the doubts and fears they awakened in her breast, and left nothing concealed except the vague communications of Nurse Murray, which a sense of shame at her own weakness in confiding to her that which she had not told to her mother, prevented her from uttering. No false pride now withheld Louisa from betraying the deep sorrow which the detection of her lover's infidelity had that night inflicted on her heart. She

wept on her fond mother's bosom those bitter tears that the discovery of unworthiness in those in whom we had garnered up the affection that was to brighten and cheer us through life never fail to make flow; and the weight of sorrow and disappointment oppressing her tortured breast was lightened by the blessed balm of sympathy by which her sufferings were shared by her doting parent.

"Who, dearest mother, could have believed him capable of such duplicity, such heartless conduct? Who, after witnessing it, could ever again put faith in man? Even after the warning at the *bal costumé* I could not bring myself to credit the charges urged against him, and blamed myself for having allowed them to make the slightest impression on me. Who would not have been deceived, as I was, by this specious dissembler, who seemed to possess every good and noble quality that could win and justify affection?"

"I would not, my precious child, irritate your feelings by attempting a defence, where I have no proof to produce against the evidence of our eyes. All I would urge is, that you will not refuse to hear what explanation he can offer for the scene of this evening."

"But think, mother, of the shame, the degradation of entering on such a subject — of betraying, as I inevitably should do, even a portion of what I feel!

Oh, no! let me see him, hear him no more, and so avoid the bitter pangs and deep humiliation which an interview, under existing circumstances, could not fail to excite."

"Consider, my own Louisa, that some explanation for so abruptly breaking off all intercourse with him will be required. It is due to him—to ourselves."

"Do not require me to see him again, mother; indeed I am not equal to it," and a passionate burst of tears attested how much even the thought of seeing her lover affected the poor girl.

"We will speak of this no more to-night, my blessed child. You have need of quiet and repose."

The pale face and melancholy shake of the head, which marked Louisa Sydney's hopelessness of finding the quiet and repose recommended by her mother, inflicted a fresh pang on the heart of the latter, who, inured to sorrow, had learned in the school of affliction how heavily the first crushing blow falls on the young. Subdued by the painful emotions of the last few hours, Louisa Sydney submitted to the will of her mother as meekly as a poor child, exhausted by bodily suffering accepts, owing to not having sufficient physical force to reject them, the remedies offered. A cup of *tilleule*, with some orange-flower water, prepared by Mrs. Sydney herself, was swallowed, and,

having undressed her daughter, the tender mother did not leave her station by her pillow until the beams of the morning penetrated the chamber, and that the breathing of her daughter assured her she was sleeping.

"And you too, my darling," thought Mrs. Sydney, as she bent over her sleeping daughter ere she quitted the room, "all my care, all my love, cannot preserve from pain and sorrow. So gifted by nature and fortune, you are not exempted from eating cares. Ah! would that I could bear the burthen that falls so heavily on your youthful heart!—I, who have drank of the cup of sorrow even unto the dregs, and whose sole chance of happiness depends on witnessing yours! How curved is that fair and open brow, on which peace so lately rested! How pale the cheek, and what an expression of grief rests on those lips that a few hours ago were smiling! Hark! they move—she speaks!"

"Henry, dear Henry," murmured Louisa, "'twas all a dream, a frightful dream; but it made me *so wretched!*" and the slumberer sighed deeply, and ceased to speak.

"My child, my poor child, may Heaven bless and preserve you!" whispered Mrs. Sydney, as she stole on tiptoe from the chamber, and sent Murray to take her place for a short time by the couch of her daughter.

The sighs — and they were deep and frequent — which stole from the agitated heart of the fevered slumberer inflicted real uneasiness on the faithful nurse. "Ah, well-a-day!" mused she, "something very terrible has happened, I am sure, or my sweet young lady would not have come home in such a taking. What can it have been? She must have heard or seen something very shocking, I'm sure, and Mr. Strathern must be at the bottom of it all. I wish, for my part, that she had never set eyes on him, for of late she has never been the same person, and, before she knew him, she was as blithe as a lark, and I never saw a frown on her brow. Yes, Mrs. Bloxham must be right; there *is* some mystery or other about this gentleman. Why, if there was not, should she shake her head in that remarkable manner? I never can get that shake out of my mind. It said more terrible things than if she spoke for an hour."

"Henry, don't look so alarmed. I am better now, indeed I am," murmured the sleeper, and there was so much love and gentleness in the tone of her voice that Nurse Murray's eyes filled with tears.

"Ah, dear heart, there it is! Asleep or awake, thinking of him, I warrant me. Poor, sweet young lady! there she lies in all her beauty, only wanting wings to be a ready-made angel to fly to heaven.

Sure, it's enough to melt a heart of stone to look on her. O! those men, those men! what can they be made of to be always giving sorrow and trouble to those that love 'em? One might think they were not born of women, nor nursed by 'em, they show so little feeling for the fair sect. Ah! if I stood in my young mistress's place, wouldn't I punish Mr. Strathern? I'd just pretend not to see him when we met; and when he spoke I'd just say, 'Oh! it's you, is it?' If he was gay, I'd be sad, and *wice versa*, until I'd led him such a life that he'd be glad to knock under to me in everything. It was in this way that I got the upper hand of poor James Murray that's dead and gone, and brought him to such good order that he daren't so much as say his life was his own. It's the only way to manage men. They are all the same—for all the world like dogs, wanting to be kept in restraint, and frisking about here and there, half mad, if left to follow their own fancies. Ah! if my dear young lady would but be advised by me, I'd soon teach her how to bring her lover to reason."

Another deep sigh moved the snowy drapery that veiled the bosom of Louisa, and Strathern's name was again murmured by her lips.

"Ah! there it is again — I really begin to hate him," thought Murray. "To get such a hold of her

affections, and in so short a time. Why, she has not known him above five or six months; and I knew poor James Murray a good seven years before I promised to marry him. But times are changed, and so are people."

CHAPTER XXX.

O Ridicule! No love's so strong
As to resist thy presence long;
Nor friendship, though devoted, true,
Can faithful rest when thou'rt in view.
At thy dread laugh, behold friends fly,
With crimson'd cheek and downcast eye;
Of thy malicious sneer afraid,
They shun the victim thou hast made.
Then ye who love or friendship prize,
Beware of ridicule, if wise.

When Mrs. Maclaurin's carriage drove to the door of the hotel, on her return to the Corso, Lord Alexander Beaulieu was standing at his window, and shrank back with a feeling of shame mingled with anger at the excessive gaudiness and bad taste of her whole equipage. "Ye Gods! what a set-out!" exclaimed he, "and how that absurd woman exposes herself! Was there ever such an absurd exhibition?"

But, if vexed at her equipage, what was his shame and rage when he beheld her descend from her carriage in the ridiculous costume she had adopted, and saw on

her person and attire the traces of the war of *bonbons*, in which she had taken so conspicuous a part!

"This abominable vulgarian will certainly drive me into insanity," thought he, "and is herself a fit subject for a lunatic asylum."

Lord Alexander Beaulieu had endeavoured to persuade Mrs. Maclaurin to relinquish going to the Corso on that day, but had found that she was so resolutely bent on witnessing the gaieties of the Carnival, that, without a rupture with her, he dared not further urge the subject; so having, with much difficulty, excused himself from attending her there, on the often resorted to plea of the impropriety of his being seen with her until they were married, he was compelled to make a virtue of necessity, and let her follow her own inclinations. He was, however, by no means prepared for the ludicrous exhibition she intended to make at the Carnival; and thought that her appearing in the Corso in any other guise than a morning dress of richer materials, and, perhaps, brighter colours than would be selected by the generality of ladies, was so wholly out of the question, that it never occurred to him to counsel her on the subject. Bitterly did he now regret not having done so; and, while indulging in self-accusation on this point, he felt his dislike to his betrothed bride increase tenfold. "What a monster!" thought he. "The exhibition she has made of herself this day

will rise up in judgment against me when she will bear my name, and I shall be pointed at as the husband of that dreadful woman, who exposed herself in the face of all Rome at the Carnival." While his lordship was giving way to these agreeable reflections, Durnford, his *valet de chambre*, to whom he had given a few hours' *congé*, that he might go to the Corso, and behold its amusements, entered his room, with a face full of wonder, which it was clear he only waited to be questioned about, to enter into a detailed account of the cause. He affected to be busily occupied in moving sundry articles on the tables and consoles, a-hemmed several times, in order that his master might become conscious of his presence, and, finding that no notice was taken of him, reminded his lordship that it was time to dress. Lord Alexander Beaulieu took the hint, but was in no humour to make inquiries relative to the gaieties in which his servant had been engaged, so began to prepare for performing the duties of the toilette.

"The Corso was very crowded to-day, my lord," observed Durnford.

"Was it?" said Lord Alexander, carelessly.

"Yes, my lord, very much so indeed. Such a number of persons! The ambassadors' carriages looked pretty well, but the Roman ones were quite a shame to be seen. They looked as old-fashioned and clumsy as if they were built when the city itself was.

There were a few neat English carriages, to be sure, that did some credit to the country, but I can't say as how Mrs. Maclaurin's was among the number. That foreign courrier of hers is a sad fellow, and very ignorant, as your lordship may suppose, when he persists in thinking that a sheriff's carriage, which he once saw in London, was the finest turn-out he ever beheld, and so persuaded Mrs. Maclaurin to have hers arranged as like it as possible. He's a great rogue into the bargain, and makes his thirty or forty per cent. on everything he orders for his mistress, which is a shame, when an honest English servant would be well satisfied with half that rate of per centage."

"But an honest servant, whether foreign or English, has no right to any per centage whatever," observed Lord Alexander Beaulieu.

"But when English servants see these foreigners making such large profits out of their masters, they'd think it very hard if they were not allowed a moderate one, and servants must live, my lord, which they can't do, if they are not to have their perquisites."

"Which mean nothing more nor less than imposition," replied Lord Alexander Beaulieu tartly.

Durnford saw that he had committed himself, and regretted his imprudence, which wishing to efface from his master's mind, he endeavoured adroitly to change the subject. "I hope Mrs. Maclaurin has received no serious injury," resumed he, "for the poor lady was

terribly pelted by the crowd. I'm sure I expected nothing less than that she would be dangerously hurt, but I must say she showed a wonderful spirit, for I never did see a lady—no, nor for the matter of that, a woman either—pitch into 'em with *bonbons*, as she did. There she was, using both arms, with her hands—and they are not small ones—filled with *bonbons*, throwing them as fast, and with as much force as she could, at the heads of all the people in the street. She half-blinded some, and hurt several, which made them so angry that they attacked her in downright earnest, pelting her with showers, not of real *bonbons*, but imitation ones, made of plaster of Paris, which hit her hard on the face, neck, and arms; but she gallantly stood her ground, and would to the last moment of her life, I'm persuaded, if the police had not interfered, and gone up to arrest her."

"The police!" exclaimed Lord Alexander Beaulieu, with horror. "Good heavens! what a scandalous affair! And what had occurred to occasion such a measure?"

"Why, my lord, the crowd began throwing *bonbons* at Mrs. Maclaurin, as they did at many other ladies. She resented it, and threw handfuls with great force at them. When they saw she was angry, they pelted her without any mercy, and, I fear, really hurt her. But, however that may be, she never gave in, and when they noticed how red she got, and how

vigorously she used her arms, they swore she was a man in disguise, and all assailed her. The police interfered, and having made the crowd forbear, all would have been well; but Mrs. Maclaurin began pelting at them afresh, and then the police went up to her balcony, and wanted to take her prisoner. She seemed to give them her mind pretty freely, for she put her arms a-kimbo, and snapped her fingers at them, and would certainly have been carried off, but that Mr. Strathern, who was on the adjoining balcony, interfered in her favour, and got the police to go away."

Lord Alexander Beaulieu listened to this statement in speechless dismay. That the woman he was about to wed should thus publicly expose herself filled him with shame and disgust; and that Strathern—the fastidious and dignified Strathern—should not only be a spectator of her exposure, but should have been the person to rescue her from the consequences of her unfeminine grossness, greatly added to his anger and humiliation. He guessed also, that where Strathern was, Mrs. and Miss Sydney were sure to be, and consequently, that these refined and decorous ladies should have witnessed the odious exhibition of the future Lady Alexander Beaulieu, almost maddened him. He bit his lip till the blood flowed from it, and his countenance revealed the rage that filled his heart, but he uttered no word; and Durnford, who expected

that his master would express the anger his statement had excited, was disappointed when his lordship coolly told him he should not require his services for half an hour.

"Well," thought the artful *valet de chambre* when at liberty in his own room to indulge his cogitations, "people may say what they like, but the nobility are *not* like the rest of mankind. *If* they feel as other men do—and *I* have great doubts on this point—they certainly manage never to show it. Why, if any one was to come to me, and tell me about Justine what I have just told his lordship about the woman he is going to marry, I'd flare up like a house on fire, swear till I was black and blue, and call her every name I could put my tongue to, while he never says a word, but just turns very pale, looks fierce about the eyes, and shows, by the quick moving of the worked cambric over his chest, that all is not right in his breast; and, instead of easing his mind, as I should in his case do, by giving her a few hearty d——s, coolly tells me he will not require my services for half an hour. No, no, the nobility are not the same as other people, and so all who come to live near enough to observe them closely must discover."

"How I loathe and abhor this abominable woman!" said Lord Alexander Beaulieu, when he found himself alone, and his countenance was so expressive of the hatred he avowed, that it was fearful to behold it.

"A man would be justified in committing any crime to get rid of such a creature," resumed he, and he clinched his hand, and struck the table with violence. "God help her, if she presumes to oppose my will when I have given her the right to my name! I feel that I could be guilty of any enormity, so strong is the hatred I bear her. Why, why do circumstances combine to force me into this odious marriage? The nearer it approaches, the stronger do I feel my dislike and disgust to her increase; and as if they were not already sufficiently deep, she must needs go and expose herself and me, as she did to-day. O, Destiny! cruel, implacable tyrant, why hast thou bestowed on me all the desires that should appertain only to the rich, and denied me the power to gratify them? Thou givest to the miser gold, which his penurious habits and frozen blood prevent him from feeling even the desire of expending in enjoyments; while to me, whose youthful blood rushes briskly through my veins, and whose desires are boundless as the ocean, thou refusest even a portion of that wealth, piled in hidden heaps, which the sun never shines on, and which know only the touch of the griping miser, or the overreaching usurer, through whose filching hands it passes to the prodigal, who stakes his grassy acres and waving woods to acquire it. And is there no road to fortune but through the temple of Hymen, desecrated by approaching it with that odious wretch? Alas! have I

not vainly tried all others? Have I not sought the fickle goddess on the green turf with fleetest steeds? Have I not courted her smiles at the gaming-table, where I have seen heaps of gold swept away by those who wanted it not?—and have I not tried to wed where love might sanctify the wealth to be acquired, but failed to win the golden prize that might have kept me from evil? Alas! nothing remains but to marry this dreadful woman. My reason confirms the pleadings urged by my poverty. Why, then, cannot I conquer, even for a short time, the disgust she inspires, and still, if not the invincible hatred, at least the symptoms of which are ever ready to betray themselves, until her fortune is mine? I must have recourse to my old remedy for the blue devils, curaçoa, otherwise I shall be unequal to meet my Gorgon."

Lord Alexander Beaulieu rang the bell, the curaçoa was demanded, and two glasses of it having disappeared, his lordship dressed for dinner, and sought the *salon* of Mrs. Maclaurin. That lady had not yet left her dressing-room, but Mrs. Bernard was seated in a distant corner of the room, awaiting her arrival. She arose, with a look of great alarm, when Lord Alexander Beaulieu entered, and would have left the *salon*, had he not civilly requested that he might not disturb her. Her appearance was so different from that which she usually presented, that he stared at her in surprise, and well he might, for her face pre-

sented a most extraordinary mixture of colours, varying from red to blue, yellow, and black, the results of the repeated showers of plaster of Paris *bonbons*, which had been so mercilessly pelted at her patroness, but some of which had hit her.

"Bless me, Mrs. Bernard, what has happened to your face?" demanded Lord Alexander Beaulieu. "It appears to be very much injured."

"Yes, my lord, it is injured; but I hope with care that it will soon get better. With your lordship's permission, I will go and inform Mrs. Maclaurin that you have arrived;" and before Lord Alexander Beaulieu had time to reply, Mrs. Bernard, with an air of great anxiety and dread, left the room. Mrs. Maclaurin soon after entered, and her face presented a most ludicrous appearance. Several large patches of sticking-plaster, much too large to be mistaken for beauty-spots, were stuck on different parts of her face, but they concealed not half the marks inflicted by the *bonbons* so rudely thrown at her, as sundry red spots proved. Her forehead had severely suffered in the conflict, and offered, by its variegated hues, a striking contrast to the bandeau of pure white Oriental pearls that crowned it. Her neck and bust, too, always red and freckled, bore evidence of the injuries they had sustained, and the splendid necklace of pearls that she wore made both appear to still greater disadvantage.

"You look amazed, my dear lord, and no wonder either, to see me in such a state," said Mrs. Maclaurin, looking somewhat abashed. "I wish I had taken your advice, and not gone to the Cor-so. But who could have imagined that the Romans could ever be such brutes as to attack a lady, one of the fair sect? It really is too bad. People may talk of the Romans* in Ireland as much as they like—and, God knows, enough mischief is laid to their charge, and to my certain knowledge much more than ever entered their heads—but they'd no more attack one of the fair sect than they'd fly, and, what's more, they'd soon settle any cowardly beasts that would dare to do so. No, the Irish Romans and the Romans here are quite different people, and so I'd like to tell the Pope, if I could see him."

"But what led to this attack on you?" demanded Lord Alexander Beaulieu, finding it difficult to repress the smile her ignorance as well as her appearance excited.

"What led to it?" reiterated the lady. "Why *they* began it, the monsters. They pelted me until I was covered with chalk or cement, and bruised severely, and I determined to show 'em that I shouldn't give in, and so throw a stain on my country. I held out, and gave them as good as they brought, and was

* Roman Catholics.

marked as you see me, for the honour of Ireland. There's many a pensioner at Greenwich Hospital that hasn't suffered more than I have done, or who was never in a hotter fire. I assure you, I can hardly move, and as to my arms, they are so tired from pelting them brutes, that I can't bend them. Ah, the beasts of the world! they had got the wrong sow by the ear, I could tell 'em, and so they found out at last, for my blood was up, and I'd have suffered death sooner than show a white feather, as they say in England. But the police interfered, and I thought, of course, that they'd be all for taking my part, seeing that I was one of the fair sect, and also a lady of fortune, which they must have at once discerned by my diamonds, and, believing this, I thought that, seeing the crowd was frightened into being quiet by the police, I'd just pay the beasts off a little for the bruises they gave me, when, would you believe it! I had no sooner thrown a few handfuls of *bonbons* with all my might and main at them, than the police came right up to my balcony, and wanted to take me prisoner, which I really believe they would have done, had not a very genteel elegant man, quite a first-rate gentleman, I assure you, come to my rescue. I saw him looking at me in a very particular sort of way before he spoke to the police. There now, don't be jealous, as I see by your long face you are going to be, for there's no occasion, as, though I invited my

preserver to come and dine with me, he refused to come."

"You cannot, surely, be serious? You *couldn't* be so very indecorous as to invite an utter stranger to dinner?"

"Now, there's a good creature, don't be so touchy and jealous," and the lady sidled up to the mortified Lord Alexander Beaulieu, and, affecting to be coquettish and playful, tapped him on the cheek with her coarse red fingers and looked archly in his face. The comical effect of her countenance, with all the patches of sticking-plaster and bruises that covered it, was irresistible; nor could her *soi-disant* admirer, albeit little inclined to laughter at that moment, forbear indulging in it.

"Ah! I see I have conquered," said Mrs. Maclaurin. "In spite of all your jealousy and ill-humour, you could not hold out against my coaxing ways. 'Twas just the same with poor Mr. Maclaurin. Ah! *that was* a man! and though he was not a lord, he had the spirit of one. When I think how indulgent and generous he was to me, I grow quite melancholy, and that gives me such a sinking at the stomach that it makes me feel quite faint. I must ring for dinner. I have ordered some ox-tail soup from the English confectioner's, and some of that, with a couple of glasses of good old madeira, will set me to rights. You don't know how ill that stupid woman, Mrs. Bernard,

behaved in my hour of trial. Instead of taking my part, and joining me in pelting the brutes who attacked me, she tried to hide herself behind me, and kept begging me all the time not to throw at them. Think what a mean-spirited, cowardly creature she must be! but I always had a bad opinion of her. She makes as much fuss because she got a few bruises and scratches in the fray, as if she were seriously injured, while I, who really bore the brunt of the attack, support it quite patiently. I think it would be only right for me to send the gentleman who saved me from the police a handsome present, and I was thinking of a diamond ring, with a couple of lines of my own making, as a suitable gift."

"What an idea!" exclaimed Lord Alexander Beaulieu, with undissembled displeasure. "You must by no means think of such a thing. Nothing would be more improper."

"And why so, pray?" demanded Mrs. Maclaurin, angrily. "When a person renders me a service—and this gentleman did when I greatly stood in need of it—wouldn't it be only proper and genteel to show him my gratitude? He'll be sure to hear that I am rich, and able to afford making him a handsome present, in return for his kindness, and he'll think me very mean and stingy if I don't."

"You must really be guided by me on this occasion, my charming friend," replied Lord Alexander Beau-

lieu; "and be assured that your sending a gift to the gentleman in question would be very indecorous, and expose you to severe animadversions, which, as my future wife, would be very painful to my feelings."

"Well, if you will have it so, I will follow your advice; but I really feel that some return ought to be made to the gentleman. There was a lady and her daughter with him, who behaved very impudently to me, but I gave her a bit of my mind, which she didn't at all like."

It instantly occurred to Lord Alexander Beaulieu that the two ladies thus referred to must be Mrs. and Miss Sydney, on whom Strathern was always in attendance; and yet both were so well-bred and reserved, that he could not account for their having had any altercation with the coarse and vulgar woman before him. The notion of their having witnessed her folly and ignorance, with the consequences both had entailed on her, filled him with vexation, the demonstration of which was so evident in his countenance that Mrs. Maclaurin remarked it, and said—

"Ah! I see you are angry with them women for being impertinent to me; but never you mind; be assured I paid them off, for I'm very well able to take my own part when once my blood is up, and I told them some disagreeable truths, which they won't forget in a hurry, I'll be bound."

"What led to the altercation between these ladies

and you, may I inquire?" demanded Lord Alexander Beaulieu.

"Why, I just spoke a few words very civilly to the old one, wishing to be a little sociable, as she stood on the balcony touching mine, and—would you believe it?—she had the impudence to turn her back, and not answer me. You may easily guess I wouldn't stand that quietly, for I knew I had more money than she had, as might easily be seen by the difference in our carriages, dress, and jewels, for she hadn't a single ornament about her but a small, plain brooch fastening her collar; in fact, she was shabby, so I gave her a lesson that will do her good. Her daughter then showed her airs, looked impertinently at me, and advised her mother not to speak to me, so I gave her my mind, too."

Lord Alexander Beaulieu felt so angry, that he almost wished Strathern had not rescued the termagant from the police; while she, believing that his wrath was excited by the insults offered to her, looked tenderly in his face, patted his cheek, and declared he was a dear, darling man.

"What must Mrs. Sydney and her daughter think of this woman?" thought he, "and of me, when they hear that I have married her? I must, however, wed her as soon as possible, in order to have the right of preventing her from exposing herself still more."

"I forgot to tell you," resumed Mrs. Maclaurin,

"that the woman who affronted me was the same person who was dressed as Queen Elizabeth at the ball cost-chew-me, and as she spoke to me there civilly enough, and asked me ever so many questions, I thought I had as good a right to speak to her then."

As Lord Alexander Beaulieu knew that this must be Lady Wellerby, he was much less annoyed than when he imagined it was Mrs. Sydney that Mrs. Maclaurin had attacked; for, strange to say, though urged by disappointment at having his addresses to her daughter and to herself rejected, to inflict any injury in his power on them, he shrunk from the notion of their coming in rude contact with her who was to be his wife, knowing that their knowledge of her must necessarily impress them with the worst opinion of him who could marry such a person.

"You are in a brown study, my lord," said Mrs. Maclaurin; "a penny for your thoughts. Come, now, tell me what you were thinking about?"

"My thoughts were precious, fair lady, for you occupied them. I was reflecting on the necessity of our setting out for Naples as soon as possible, so I hope you will hold yourself in readiness to leave Rome the day after to-morrow."

"Well, if you insist upon it; but really, I'm so shy" —and here the lady made a very clumsy attempt to enact the *rôle* of a bashful *fiancée*—"that the nearer

the day draws nigh for our marriage the more timid do I feel."

"You must conquer this shyness, though it is infinitely becoming to you, I must acknowledge," observed her *soi-disant* lover, raising her hand to his lips. "You forget that you have once before approached the hymeneal altar."

"Indeed! and small blame to me if I forget it. Sure it was a very different marriage to what ours will be. Poor Mr. Maclaurin, though as good a man as ever was born, was too old to fall in love, as you have done. *He* only married me for my voice, whereas *you* chose me for myself; and you are not only a lord, but a fine handsome young one into the bargain. Oh! it's quite another guess matter. But what can be the reason dinner isn't served? I'm half dead with hunger, and the stupid people here always keep me waiting, every day, and that puts me in a passion, which spoils my digestion. I often think what's the good of being rich, if one can't have everything the moment one wants it? But here it comes at last, after been kept waiting an hour since it was ordered to be served."

CHAPTER XXXI.

When jealous pangs fond hearts invade,
They summon pride unto their aid.
And it can outward calm impart,
While inly bleeds the tortured heart;
Can smoothe the brow, and check the tear,
While yet the lov'd one lingers near.
But ah! how soon pride's reign is o'er
When the beloved is seen no more!
Then gush the tears that had *he* seen,
Perhaps no cause for tears had been,
And pride no longer can sustain
The wounded heart that writhes in pain.

When Louisa Sydney awoke from her agitated slumbers, the morning after she had seen Strathern at the Coliseum, she felt for the first few minutes a vague sense of pain and sorrow, similar to that experienced when one is first aroused from an afflicting dream. Had she indeed been dreaming? was the first question that presented itself to her mind, but too soon came

the sad recollection of what she had seen and heard the previous night—the tender attention with which Strathern bent down to listen to the low accents of his lovely companion, and the earnestness with which he replied to her—and tears, bitter tears, chased each other down her cheeks. Beautiful as the lady she had seen walking with him really was, Louisa Sydney, in the self-torturing spirit of jealousy, exaggerated her charms, and drew the most disparaging comparisons between them and her own—in the excess of her humility, almost finding an excuse for the infidelity of her lover in the superior attractions of her rival.

But his deception and hypocrisy she could find no excuse for. This shocked and pained her, for it destroyed her respect for him. She had not only passionately, fondly, loved Strathern, but had entertained for him a sincere esteem, the only sure basis for a lasting affection. Now, all this fair edifice of love was shattered to the ground, and its overthrow had so severely injured the heart where it was built, that she felt she should never more experience the happiness so lately her own. Henceforth in whom could she confide, when *he* who seemed the very soul of truth and honour could thus deceive? And were all the vows of love, the interchange of thoughts, that had served to bind them so closely and fondly to each other, nothing more—on his side, at least—than a part

of that system of deception practised to win the fortune of the heiress, that he might lavish it on the real object of his attachment? "Ah! who would be rich?" thought the weeping girl, as she writhed in agony over the destruction of her cherished hopes, and opened her mind to the cruel suspicions forced on her by the detection of her lover's falsehood. "Were I poor, he would not have sought me, and I should not now have to mourn over the ruin of my happiness."

Mrs. Sydney found her daughter pale and suffering; but Louisa had now schooled herself to conceal, if not to conquer, the violence of her grief, and her mother was gratified at observing the calmness of her demeanour, until, after a closer examination, she saw how much the effort cost her daughter.

"Mother," said the agonized girl, "I have reflected much and deeply on the painful position in which I at this moment stand, and, to escape future regret, I have determined on once more seeing Strathern. It is due to him; and, whatever the result of our interview may be, I shall hereafter feel more satisfied that I did not deny him an opportunity for explanation, if, indeed, an honourable one can be found."

"My precious child, I don't wish to curb your inclination on this point, but *indeed*, Louisa, I fear an interview, under existing circumstances, will only serve to inflict additional pain on you."

"Then you no longer think, mother, that he can be guiltless?" and the blush that rose to the cheek of Louisa, previously pale as Parian marble, betrayed the deep emotion occasioned by this proof that her mother did not now offer any plea in favour of her lover. "You are silent, mother, but too well do I know how to interpret that silence. It convinces me that you, like me, are assured that the person we saw him with last night is not such a one as my affianced husband should be seen with."

"But what object do you propose to yourself, my child, by this interview?" said Mrs. Sydney, evading to notice her daughter's interpretation of her silence.

"My project, mother, is to force myself to assume as calm an aspect as I can—my pride will, I trust, enable me to conceal my feelings—and receive him as much in the usual way as will be possible with my altered sentiments, and thus give him an opportunity of explaining who the person is with whom we saw him."

"Alas! my child, I fear it is a subject on which he could not touch with you or me. A night's calm reflection has brought me to think that there is, there *must* be, something very wrong in what we last night witnessed. No prudent woman would be seen alone with any man who was not her husband or brother at such an hour, and in so lonely a place. We are acquainted with every one in good society here, but

the face we then beheld was that of a total stranger."

Louisa Sydney slightly shuddered, and became of a deathlike paleness. She pressed her hands to her heart, as if to still its beatings, and presented such a picture of woe, that her mother could no longer repress her tears.

"You weep, dearest mother, and for me! you who have had long years of so much sorrow;" and extending her arms towards her parent, who pressed her daughter to her breast, they for some time mingled their tears together. No attempt at consolation could have been half so efficacious as the deep sympathy of her mother, thus so unequivocally expressed, and Louisa Sydney felt that never until the last few hours had she really known how to estimate the maternal heart, with its inexhaustible store of tenderness and commiseration, which now, in her hour of need, sent gushing forth its waters of balm, to soothe and heal the wounds of her lacerated heart. When relieved by tears, Louisa again expressed her desire to see Strathern once more.

"It may be a weakness, dear mother, but I pray you to bear with me, when I urge this wish of mine against your opinion. I want to judge for myself how he will look and act when we meet, and whether it will be possible for him to assume his usual tenderness of manner and fond devotion after what we have

seen. If he *can*, why then I think I may bring myself, as I ought, to rejoice in my deliverance from such a husband."

But, alas! the changeful colour and trembling lips of the agitated girl but too well betrayed that, whatever might be the result of the purposed interview, the time was yet far, far distant, when, however her reason might approve it, her rupture with her lover could become a source of satisfaction to her. Even firmer minds than Louisa Sydney's might be pardoned for the feverish anxiety that now filled hers in the trying position in which she found herself placed. Strathern had been so truly loved, had filled her heart and her thoughts so wholly during the last few months, had so entirely occupied the present and mingled with every plan, every hope of the future, that she could not tear his image from her breast without almost breaking the heart with whose very fibres it was entwined. To think of him of whom she had made an idol, now degraded and worthless, was torture, was agony. The present was insupportable, and the future she dared not contemplate. Forgetful of the precepts of religion, that only true consolation in all earthly trials, she prayed for death, thoughtless of how unfit she was, with a heart filled with love for man, to meet the presence of her divine Creator. Mrs. Sydney, unwilling to give pain by opposing, at length yielded to the wish of her daughter. Louisa

arose from her bed, but such had been the effect of sorrow and disappointed affection on her delicate frame that it was long before she could get through the duties of her toilet. When Nurse Murray presented one of the favourite robes of Strathern, and the ribbons lately selected by her youthful mistress in compliance with his taste, a burst of fresh tears streamed down the cheeks of Louisa as she waved her hand to have them put aside.

"Give me a black silk dress," said she, feeling that it would be a mockery to attire her person in gay colours, while all within was dark and cheerless; and Mrs. Sydney, who well understood what was passing in her daughter's mind, remembered how she, too, long after the prescribed time for wearing black had expired, turned with distaste from the coloured dresses presented for her use by officious friends. Not so did Nurse Murray feel. "Oh! what a pity it is," thought she, "that my darling young lady will put on that gloomy black! It never was becoming to her, even when she was well; but now, when she looks as pale as a ghost, and has the tears springing into her eyes every minute, it will make her look plain, if any dress could have that effect. Besides, I can't bear that *he* should have the satisfaction of seeing her looking ill. It will be just for all the world like saying 'see how miserable you have made me;' and no woman, be she the highest or the poorest, should ever let any

man, not even the best of them, know that he has such a power over her. I know the sect. They are all alike, and never to be trusted with power. If God made us the weaker vessels, as we are called, hasn't *He* given us cunning to keep the strong in order? For what else have we our tongues, of which the stoutest men are afraid, and our tears, which the rudest cannot withstand? Wouldn't the horse master his rider, if he only knew his own strength and the other's weakness? but the rider conceals both, and masters the poor animal, by never letting him know his own power. This is what we women should do. We ought never to let the men know how weak, how fond we can be, but, like the rider with the horse, make 'em believe we are strong and powerful."

Nurse Murray would have given expression to her thoughts had she been alone with her young lady, even at the risk of displeasing her, so firmly was she persuaded of the wisdom of her own opinion on the momentous subject in question; but the presence of Mrs. Sydney, of whom she stood in a certain degree of awe, imposed silence on her, so her youthful mistress missed the opportunity of hearing her sentiments, all of which were founded on her own experience in matrimonial life, and on the yielding disposition of her meek-hearted helpmate, over whom her self-will and power of rhetoric had achieved an easy conquest.

"No," resumed Murray, "*I* would have put on

my most becoming dress and gayest ribands, and, so far from letting him see that he had power of grieving me, I would have pretended—ay, even though my heart was breaking, that I would—to be in the highest spirits imaginable, until I had brought him to submission. Ah! well a-day, what a pity it is that women should ever grow old, and so lose the power of tormenting! Perhaps, after all, it is as well my poor husband was removed from this life before I had lost my empire over him, which, probably, when he had seen me grow old, would have been the case, and I never could have borne to see him set up to have a way of his own. No! that would have broken my heart outright, while now I have the comfort of reflecting that up to his last hour I never allowed him to think or act for himself, and this is a great consolation."

While these cogitations were passing in the mind of Nurse Murray, her hands were occupied in dressing her young mistress, who, totally passive under her operations, with eyes averted from her mirror, longed to be released from the irksome task of adornment, now that she no longer sought to please. It was but the previous day that she had felt a pleasure in that which at present fatigued and annoyed her. How well she remembered every trivial incident connected with the toilet of the preceding morning! How she had half offended Nurse Murray by declining to wear the

robe she had prepared for her, because it was the one which Strathern the least liked! How glad she had felt when her mirror had assured her that her dress was peculiarly becoming—not from vanity, for Louisa Sydney was not a vain woman, but simply because she knew that it would give pleasure to her lover to see her looking well! And now she no longer had an object to induce attention to her dress, no longer a desire to appear to advantage in *his* eyes, whom alone she had hitherto wished to please. However *recherché* or becoming her attire might be, how could *she* hope to compete in personal attraction with the lovely woman whom she had beheld him with the night before! No! all was now over. Henceforth she would abandon herself to the dreary fate which his infidelity and falsehood had prepared for her, and await, as best she might, the death which, she doubted not, must, sooner or later, follow sufferings like those endured since the previous night.

Poor Louisa! she had yet much to learn in the science of affliction—that science, the first rudiments of which she had but so lately begun to acquire, and whose lessons require a patience which time alone can bestow. She had yet to know that death comes not when prayed for; or else how few among the young, who, shrinking under the first disappointment of the heart, implore it, would ever arrive at maturity! When such a disappointment first falls on the young

heart, palsying its finest and most generous impulses, an all-engrossing selfishness is apt to replace the nobler qualities that had previously characterised it, and it is not until sorrow has sufficiently tried it that it resumes its former purity. This was now the case with Louisa Sydney. Alive only to the bitterness of her own grief, she forgot, in her desire to escape from it by the death which she invoked, how desolate, if deprived of her only child, her sole consolation on earth, would that fond mother's lot be who now lived but for her.

Supported on the arm of Mrs. Sydney, her daughter, tremulous with emotion, entered the saloon, and took her usual place there. Every sound agitated her, and the symptoms of her agitation were so evident, *malgré* all her efforts to conceal them, that her mother once more entreated her to abandon her project of seeing Strathern, and let *her* receive him; but Louisa was not to be persuaded; and while her mother was yet urging her, Strathern's well-known step was heard in the ante-room, and in the next moment he entered the apartment. His step was buoyant, and there was a joyousness in his aspect and in the very sound of his voice, as he approached and uttered the customary salutations, little in unison with the feelings of those he addressed. Notwithstanding that both Mrs. Sydney and Louisa endeavoured to appear as usual, there was a gravity, if not a sadness, in their counte-

nances and manner that instantly struck Strathern, and subdued his cheerfulness.

"Has anything occurred—have either of you been ill?" demanded he with evident anxiety, looking from one to the other. "Yes, you, dearest, I now see have been suffering;" and he again took Louisa's trembling hand, and pressed it to his lips.

"I have not been quite well," said she, "but it was nothing serious, a mere slight and temporary indisposition."

"I wished so much to get to you last night, but found, to my annoyance, that it was impossible. There was no means of escaping from my friend, until it was too late to present myself here."

Louisa felt the blood mount to her cheek at this statement, which she received as an irrefragable proof of the hypocrisy and unworthiness of her lover; and Mrs. Sydney, calm and patient as she was in general, experienced a sentiment of indignation she found it difficult to repress. Strathern, who observed Louisa's blush, attributed it to anger at his not having come to her the preceding night, and felt vexed at her still continuing to betray her displeasure.

"Then you remained with your friend the whole evening," observed Louisa.

"Yes; after dinner I accompanied him, it being a fine moonlight night, in a drive around Rome, where he has never previously been, in order that he might

see the exterior, at least, of some of the objects that he most wished to behold. He is quite unable to walk, and so infirm, that I fear there is but little chance of his ever recovering."

This statement, delivered without the slightest symptom of embarrassment on the part of the speaker, conveyed such a conviction to his hearers, that dissimulation and falsehood were habitual to him, that both felt their disgust and anger considerably increased. One of those dead pauses ensued, so disagreeable when the individuals composing a small circle are under a constraint, and yet wish to avoid betraying their consciousness of it. Strathern turned to Mrs. Sydney, whose general equanimity and peculiar kindness to himself he had so often experienced, as if to seek a solution of the cause of the incomprehensible change in the manner of his affianced wife, but a gravity almost amounting to sternness, never previously observable in the countenance of that lady, checked the inquiry that hovered on his lips, and increased the painful sense of embarrassment that stole over him. With some effort, he again essayed to break the spell of silence, and hazarded some common-place remark on the weather, that never-failing resource of an Englishman to keep up a flagging conversation, or renew a dropped one. But this experiment was unsuccessful, for it drew only a monosyllable from one of the ladies.

Strathern felt his displeasure growing into real anger, as he sat eyeing alternately mother and daughter, and endeavoured to find a cause for their inexplicable coldness and reserve. Was his having devoted one evening to an old and dear friend to be punished as if he had committed some deep offence? and was Mrs. Sydney, instead of using her exertions to make her daughter sensible of the unreasonableness of her displeasure for such a trivial cause, to evince herself an equal degree of dissatisfaction? If so, then had he but little chance of happiness in his proposed union with her daughter; and his marriage with the beloved object of his affection, hitherto looked forward to with joyful anticipation, as the crowning of his felicity, would be but the commencement of a life of despotism on her part, and contemptible submission, or open rebellion on his. No, such a prospect was too dreadful to contemplate! He must come to an explanation with Louisa, must establish an understanding that would restore the happy future with her which he had previously expected, or—he must break with her for ever. And yet, angry as he was, he dared not reflect on the possibility of losing her, without a pang, that made him sensible how closely interwoven her image was with his hopes of happiness—nay, with his very existence itself. He trembled lest, in his present state of irritation, he might be hurried into the expression of his feelings, and give

utterance to aught that might widen the unaccountable breach between them; so he determined on withdrawing, and remaining absent a few hours until his mind had recovered its calmness.

He arose, pleaded an engagement, and approached to take the hand of Louisa. It was accorded to him with an air of such freezing coldness, that he scarcely retained it a moment in his, yet he still lingered in the room, expecting the usual invitation to dinner. It, however, came not, nor when he was leaving the room was a single word said by either mother or daughter that indicated a desire or an expectation of seeing him again that day. What did, what could all this strange conduct mean? He could not form even a suspicion, unless it originated in his not having returned to spend the previous evening with Louisa, as she had expressed her wish that he should. And yet the punishment was so very much disproportioned to the offence—if, indeed, offence it could be really termed—that he could not reconcile it to his knowledge of Mrs. Sydney and her daughter's character that they should thus act.

He left the house in a state of great agitation, and was proceeding to his hotel, when, nearly at its door, he met the carriage of Lord Delmington, with its owners in it. He would have retreated from them, so unfit did he feel at that moment for holding intercourse with even his most esteemed friend; but, unfortu-

nately, Lord Delmington caught sight of him, and, stopping the carriage, said, "We were just going to your hotel in search of you, my dear Strathern, for I want you to take Mary into St. Peter's, as I cannot have the pleasure of doing so myself. Come into the carriage."

Strathern paused, and gladly would have made some excuse for not complying with his friend's request; but Lord Delmington, with the impatience that often accompanies ill-health, exclaimed, "Come, Strathern, don't stand waiting;" and mechanically, the step being let down by the servant, Strathern entered the carriage.

"I fear we have interrupted you when you have some other engagement," said the beautiful woman who was seated by Lord Delmington, and who, with all a woman's tact, perceived in an instant that Strathern would have preferred not accompanying them.

"No great matter if we even do make him break an engagement for once," observed Lord Delmington; "for, as we positively go away to Naples to-morrow, he will be soon quit of the trouble of lionizing us."

Strathern said something civil about his having pleasure in being of use to Lady Delmington, though wishing himself a hundred miles off while he uttered the words, and they proceeded to St. Peter's. Half a dozen carriages were drawn up in front of the church as the one he was seated in approached; and he, hav-

ing cast a hurried glance of inquiry, to ascertain whether they belonged to any of his acquaintances, was glad to find they did not, for he was unwilling to be seen alone with a strange lady, and, above all, one whose beauty was so remarkable as to attract all eyes, and yet whose position was so equivocal as the one with whom he was about to enter St. Peter's.

"I will drive up and down," said Lord Delmington, "while you take Mary round the church. You need not hurry yourself, dearest," resumed he, addressing himself to his fair companion, who was unwilling to leave him, "for, as I am not able to enter this glorious temple, it will be a pleasure to me that you should see it."

Strathern gave his arm to Lady Delmington to ascend, and, having lifted the heavy curtain that drapes the entrance, he found himself, when on the inner side of it, *vis-à-vis* to Mr. Rhymer, and so close that there was no avoiding him. The eyes of the old man became riveted on the beautiful face of the lady, which never could have appeared to greater advantage than at that moment, when lighted up by the enthusiastic admiration which the first sight of that wondrous fane excited.

"Ah! you here," observed Rhymer, extending his hand to Strathern, "and, as I see, leading an angel to the shrine of a saint."

Lady Delmington blushed at this florid compliment, and her heightened colour rendered her still handsomer.

"You are indeed a fortunate man," resumed Rhymer, "for you seem to exist in an atmosphere of beauty. I never see you that you are not escorting some one of earth's fairest daughters. May I claim the privilege of an old man, and ask to be presented to your lovely companion?"

Strathern felt the blood rise to his cheek, and the consciousness that his confusion and embarrassment were visible to Rhymer, whose eyes were fixed with a searching earnestness on his face, increased both. "Another time, perhaps," muttered he, moving abruptly away with the lady, and leaving Rhymer standing as if rooted to the spot.

"How very disagreeable!" said Lady Delmington, in her sweetest accents; "I saw you were embarrassed; but who could have imagined that we should have met any one who would thus, *sans ceremonie*, ask to be presented to me? Who is that old man?"

"He is no other than Rhymer, the poet."

"What! the author of some of my most favourite poems? I am sorry I did not know him. Oh! Mr. Strathern, what a temple, and how instinct with grandeur and beauty! What would I not give that my dear Francis were here to behold it! Every sight loses half its attraction for me when he cannot share the delight of seeing it with me."

Though in no mood to be pleased with anything at that moment, Strathern could not resist feeling the

charm spread around her by the young and artless being by whose side he walked through that glorious fane, as, rapt in the contemplation of its countless beauties, and the sublimity of the whole, she now moved silently along, seemingly forgetful of his presence. At length she awoke as from a dream, and said, "Now let us go to Francis. How selfish of me to have stayed from him so long!"

To account for the embarrassment in which Strathern found himself placed with regard to avowing at once to Louisa Sydney the new female acquaintance he had formed, and the visit with her the preceding night to the Coliseum, we must inform our readers that when he went to the hotel to dine with Lord Delmington, he was never more surprised than on being presented to a young and lovely woman as his lordship's wife. The tale Lord Delmington had to tell was a brief one. He had fallen in love with the only daughter of his tutor, a clergyman with whom his father had placed him after he had left college. The moment the conscientious Mr. Ravensfield had discovered the attachment, he revealed it to the Marquis of Roehampton, who instantly summoned his son to the paternal home, when, having reproached him with a severity little calculated to work the desired effect, he prohibited him, under pain of his eternal displeasure, ever again to hold intercourse with the object of his affection, whom he designated as an artful and

designing girl, while he stigmatized her worthy father as a hypocrite, who hoped to win his consent to the ennobling his low-born daughter by an affected show of honour in revealing the attachment of his degenerate son.

The health of Lord Delmington, always delicate, sank beneath his separation from the innocent and lovely Mary Ravensfield, and the harshness of his father. The Marquis of Rochampton, alarmed by his danger, consented to his son's adopting the advice of the physicians consulted, and proceeding forthwith to Italy. Lord Delmington found means, ill as he was, to evade the watchful care of his stern parent. He hurried to the parsonage, to take leave of his adored Mary, and to renew his vows of unalterable and devoted love. He found it empty. The worthy clergyman had died a few days before, leaving his orphan child nearly portionless, and dependant for a home on the kindness of an elderly maiden lady of limited means, who resided in the neighbourhood, and who had taken a deep interest in her since the death of her mother. Lord Delmington's resolution was instantly taken. He determined to wed his dear Mary at once, and to make her the companion of his visit to Italy. His impassioned pleadings won the consent of the lovely girl and her protectress, who, aware of the insulting letters written by the Marquis of Rochampton to Mr. Ravensfield—letters that she firmly believed

had greatly accelerated his death, felt a pleasure in thinking that the orphan would, in spite of the harsh and unjust marquis, be elevated to a station from which he could not dispossess her. The marriage was celebrated in her presence and that of two other chosen friends of the late rector, and it was agreed that it should not be declared until the youthful pair were beyond the reach of the stern father's anger, which his son's precarious state of health rendered him unfit to cope with. Lord Delmington made Strathern promise not to reveal his marriage until the disclosure had first been made to his father, which he meant should be in a short time.

The seclusion in which the Marquis of Roehampton had immured his only son had tended to keep him in a state of ignorance with regard to a knowledge of the world and its conventional usages, seldom to be found in a man of high birth who had reached the age of twenty-three. Little, therefore, did Lord Delmington imagine that, by concealing his marriage, he was exposing the fair fame of the object dearest to him in life to the most injurious suspicions; and that, as the companion of his travels, Mary, the pure-minded, innocent Mary, was supposed to have no legitimate right to his protection.

When dinner was over, he proposed that Strathern should accompany him and his wife in a *giro*, which his friend could not well refuse; and when they drove

to the Coliseum, he asked Strathern to conduct her to the interior of it. The conversation overheard by Louisa bore reference to the promise of secrecy relative to the marriage exacted by Lord Delmington, and which his wife was as anxious as himself should be kept until her husband's health was sufficiently improved to enable him to bear up against the first burst of his father's wrath on hearing of it. Strathern had urged his friend no longer to delay writing to his father, or to expose Lady Delmington to animadversion, and thus was he unwillingly involved in a false position without any fault of his own.